PSYCHEDELIC SHAMANISM

The Cultivation, Preparation and Shamanic Use of Psychotropic Plants

Jim DeKorne

Psychedelic Shamanism (Full Edition,Scanned by ReBorn .June.2006)
The Cultivation, Preparation and Shamanic Use of Psychotropic Plants
© 1994 by Jim DeKorne
Cover photo from a painting by "Pedro D." in the author's private collection.
All photos courtesy of Jim DeKorne.
Illustrations © 1994 by John Megahan/The Technical Sketch.
All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or stored in any form whatsoever without the prior written consent of the publisher. Reviews may quote brief
passages without the written consent of the publisher as long as proper credit is given. Ooops! me bad!
Published by:
Loompanics Unlimited
PO Box 1197
Port Townsend, WA 98368

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments
foreword

Part One

The Shamanic Hypothesis

Chapter One

Altered States

Chapter Two

Shamanic Dimensions

Chapter Three

The Experience of Many *Worlds*

Chapter Four

living In The One World

Chapter Five

The Entities of The Imaginal Realm — *Part* 1

Chapter Six

The Entities of The Imaginal Realm — *Part* 2

Part Two

***Psychedelic* Catalysts**

Chapter Seven

The Belladonna Alkaloids

Chapter Eight

d-Lysergic Acid Amide:
Morning-Glory Seeds, Stipa Robusta

Chapter Nine

Mescaline: Peyote And San Pedro

Chapter Ten

Ayahuasca and Its *Analogues:*
*Harmine And D*MT

Chapter Eleven

*Smokable D*MT *from* Plants

Chapter Twelve

Psilocybin:
"Magic Mushrooms"

Chapter Thirteen

The Minor Psychedelics

Chapter Fourteen

Extraction Procedures

Chapter Fifteen

Some Thoughts About Technique

Afterword

bibliography

back cover

Acknowledgments

This book makes no claim to be definitive; the scope of the subject is obviously too broad to accommodate any such expectation.The most I can hope for is to pique the reader's interest in exploring the realms of mind-space and sharing his or her findings with the rest of us.I have done my best to sift through a vast number of sources to select what seems to me to be true.The mythology surrounding the subject makes this a difficult task,and I hope all factual errors will be brought to my attention. Some of the material herein appeared in a different form in Gnosis Magazine,Spring,1992; Psychedelic Illuminations,Summer,1993;Psychedelic Monographs and Essays,#7,1994,and in both signed and anonymous pieces I wrote for The Entheogen Review, issues 1-5,1992 and 1993. I am deeply grateful to the large number of people who have generously shared their expertise and experience with me while I was writing this book. For obvious reasons I am not free to acknowledge them by name.They all know who they are anyway. Thanks, friends. I couldn't have done it without your help. There's just limited number of bitter substances one person can consume without getting burned-out!

Finally, it is impossible to write anything on the subject of psychedelics or shamanism these days without acknowledging the work of Terence McKenna. While I hope that my own experience and research may provide some useful new perspectives on these topics, it is very difficult not to tread on paths that Mr. McKenna hasn't already traveled, if not blazed himself. Indeed, my interest in these matters was rekindled after several years of dormancy solely because of my exposure to this man's brilliance.

Foreword

Shamanism goes far beyond a primarily self-concerned transcendence of ordinary reality. It is transcendence for a broader purpose, the helping of humankind. The enlightenment of shamanism is the ability to light up what others perceive as darkness, and thereby to see and to journey on behalf of a humanity that is perilously close to losing its spiritual connectedness with all its relatives, the plants and animals of this good Earth.[1]

We are tearing the earth to pieces, we are spewing out toxins -- and the entire planet is reacting. Psychedelics are going to play a major role in helping people to become aware of what is really happening.[2]

The draconian laws against psychedelic drugs, including the prohibition of legitimate research into their effects upon human consciousness are ultimately based upon our culture's fear of the new model of reality that they imply. To put it bluntly, if we took the psychedelic paradigm seriously, we would be forced to change our lives completely. It is hard to imagine anything more revolutionary, and hence (from the conventional point of view), more dangerous and worthy of repression.

Drug-induced alterations of consciousness are labeled as deadly, self-indulgent illusions in Western society, hence are seen as a challenge to the status quo and something to forbid for all eternity.

The intemperate panic fueling our anti-drug legislation reveals an

appalling irrationality within the national psyche. Murderers routinely receive lighter prison sentences than people captured with "unauthorized" plants in their possession!

The average sentence served for murder in the U.S. is six and a half years, while eight years with no possibility of parole is mandatory for the possession of 700 marijuana plants. It doesn't matter if the plants are seedlings or mature -- the federal government treats each as a potential kilo of product.[3]

Laws like these and the confused and impoverished value system which allows them to manifest are seriously dissociated from reality. The people who demand them and the people who enforce them have lost all humane perspective, and these appalling statutes long ago forfeited the respect and allegiance of rational minds. Injustice always breeds contempt for the law.

The irony of this, of course, lies in the distinct promise that psychedelic substances offer for the resolution of current human problems at both personal and collective levels. Here are medicines that could help us to grow, yet we make it all but impossible to obtain and use them. That, it seems to me, is a synonym for chronic illness at best, evolutionary suicide at worst. I am today a psychologically and spiritually enriched person because of psychedelic drug-experiences I had decades ago, yet I'd be the last person to proselytize the use of such materials as a path for everyone. These substances are powerful catalysts for personal insight, yet when absorbed into the metabolism of those who are not ready for them they have proven to be both individually and socially disruptive. Of course this is not a characteristic of the drugs, but of the consciousness of those who ingest them, and our reactionary laws against psychedelics may be seen as an index of how far we have to go as culture to attain even minimum levels of psychological sophistication in these matters.

Suffice it to say that I and countless other individuals have had deeply meaningful experiences with hallucinogens which almost certainly would never have occurred without them. I have learned that human awareness plays itself out between the of unity and multiplicity, and that within this multiplicity reside intelligences capable of becoming allies to human endeavor. What is most important it seems to me, is

that such occurrences are not particularly unusual; others have received similar insights both with and without the use of a chemical catalyst. Mystical writings the world over reveal comparable ideas, and data collected from researches in depth psychology, comparative religion and shamanism strongly suggest that these perceptions may actually constitute the hidden substructure of consciousness itself! To prohibit legitimate access to our deepest realms of awareness through rigid,fear-based legislation may be one of the most egregious errors of our contemporary culture,nothing less than a denial of our essence as human beings.

Denial, in the pathological meaning of the word,is an avoidance mechanism deeply embedded within the unconscious psyche; it is an irrational refusal to recognize legitimate challenges to our beliefs and addictions. Denial, for example, is a common response of alcoholics in avoiding the reality of their condition. Denial is a much larger problem in today's world than just a maladaptive tactic of addictive personalities. It is an endemic (and potentially fatal) cultural disease. In her essay, "Denial in the decisive decade," Sandra Postel makes a direct connection between denial as a cultural non-strategy and the world-wide ecological crisis threatening the stability of our planet:

Rather than face the truth, denial's victims choose slow suicide. In a similar way, by pursuing lifestyles and economic goals that ravage the environment, we sacrifice long-term health and well-being for immediate gratification -- a trade-off that cannot yield a happy ending. There is a practice in the treatment of alcoholism called intervention, in which family members and friends, aided by a counselor, attempt to shake the alcoholic out of denial.... A similar kind of "intervention" is needed to arrest the global disease of environmental degradation.... *Extraordinary change is possible when enough courageous people grasp the need for it and become willing to act.... Once denial is stripped away, what other option do we have?* (Emphasis mine)[4]

Anyone with the courage to stare reality in the face must acknowledge that ecological disruptions created by the human exploitation of nature

have grown into autonomous forces, in many cases now beyond the control of even those sorcerer's apprentices who set them in motion.

Natural systems are in an accelerating state of metastasis and the ancient predator paradigms of Individualism, Nationalism and Exclusiveness have lost most of their relevance. No matter how much we prefer to deny it, such beliefs now have little survival value even for individuals, much less for societies.

Any plausible solution to these problems implies some recognition of the fact that "no part can flourish at the expense of its fellows without doing damage to the whole." Reduced to its essence, this can all be summarized as a crisis in consciousness, a crisis in our collective capacity and willingness to perceive ourselves as satellites to a system of forces transcending the immediately obvious. If our consciousness, the way we perceive reality, is pathologically flawed, then it behooves those of us able to realize this fact to find a new paradigm, a new way to position and perceive ourselves in the flow of time and events.

Shamanic cultures have always defined themselves within that transcendent reality which we have belatedly identified as "expanded consciousness." Although perceived by us as "primitive," these usually tribal societies retain a discernment which we have lost to everyone's peril. They do not recognize themselves apart from their surroundings and often attribute their deepest wisdom to insights provided by psychedelic catalysts:

Nature is not our enemy, to be raped and conquered. Nature is ourselves, to be cherished and explored. Shamanism has always known this, and shamanism has always, in its most authentic expressions, taught that the path required allies. These allies are the hallucinogenic plants and the mysterious teaching entities, luminous and transcendental, that reside in that nearby dimension of ecstatic beauty and understanding that we have denied until it is now nearly too late.[5]

If we as a culture are ever going to recant our denial of some of the most elementary facts of life, it seems there is little time left to accomplish it. If a critical mass of new awareness is to manifest soon

enough to halt the further degeneration of our global life-support systems it will have to emerge within the lifetimes of most of the people now on the planet. Compared with the time-scale of previous evolutionary changes, this "window of opportunity" is a mere nano-second: millions of years of slow mutation concentrated into one accelerated moment of choice,the choice of a materially addicted, semi-conscious species to become fully conscious in the instant before extinction.
Terence McKenna is the primary contemporary advocate for the idea that the intelligent use of psychedelic drugs among those best equipped to benefit from them might be one way to achieve such awareness in the time remaining:

The solution to much of modern malaise, including chemical dependencies and repressed psychoses and neuroses, is direct exposure to the authentic dimensions of risk represented by the experience of psychedelic plants. The pro-psychedelic plant position is clearly an anti-drug position. Drug dependencies are the result of habitual, unexamined, and obsessive behavior; these are precisely the tendencies in our psychological makeup that the psychedelics mitigate. The plant hallucinogens dissolve habits and hold motivations up to inspection by a wider, less egocentric, and more grounded point of view within the individual. It is foolish to suggest that there is no risk, but it is equally uninformed to suggest that the risk is not worthtaking.[6]

This radical and seemingly eccentric notion has been floating around since the sixties at least. It surfaced in the late '70s in this guise:

There is now such a desperate need for humanity to improve its navigational skills on the ocean of life that any aid which can hasten the process should be entertained. Consciousness-altering drugs may be drastic measures, but what could be more drastic than the problems now engulfing the planet? Physicians seldom hesitate to prescribe medicines for sickness of the body. Why then, should we not prescribe medicines for sickness of the soul, especially when our very survival is

at stake?[7]

The author of this quotation was advocating psychotherapeutic applications of Ketamine, a legal anesthetic which has profound hallucinogenic properties in reduced doses. John Lilly, MD, probably the investigator with the most experience with this drug, eventually came to regard Ketamine as too risky for this purpose. It could be argued that the primary reason for this reservation was that the research group he was involved with apparently lacked a Shamanic structure to manage the hallucinogenic experience without serious consequences:

Several had found themselves prone to "robotlike" behavior carried to the point where it appeared that the body was actually taken over by alien forces.[8]

Most people shake their heads at such information, and regard the notion of "possession by alien forces" as a drug-induced hallucination. It is this disbelief, based upon the deeply ingrained illusions of materialism, that is the crux of the problem; we are handicapping ourselves into extinction by our pseudo-scientific denial of any perception transcending a narrowly defined consensus reality. Ultimately, we must face the question of how willing we are to accept the hypothesis of other dimensions: not the lip service paid to Heaven and Hell by the monotheistic religions, but the possibility of immediate personal perception of other realms of experience.

One of the major themes of this book concerns the postulate that transcendent dimensions and the entities inhabiting them are real, and that much of the challenge of using psychedelics profitably lies in learning how to integrate such insights into our world-view. The entity phenomenon challenges our will and capacity to take the next step in the evolution of consciousness at a time when the survival of our species is threatened. Reason suggests that many of the answers to our space/time dilemma lie in an analysis of the techniques of shamanism to provide guiding structures for these vital new explorations.

As regards the "legality" of such issues, Noam Chomsky has said: "Those who own the country purchase the government." Bob Dylan has said: "You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows." It is easy to see whose deadly interests are being threatened here, and it is also easy to see that those powers who profit from destroying the planet are the same powers who will confiscate your property and throw you in prison for the crime of expanding your awareness. When seen in this perspective, psychedelic shamanism becomes a moral imperative for those of us who care enough about our lives to live them fully and fearlessly, regardless of consequences. Consequences create new choices which create new consequences; only a few hundred years ago it was a capital offense to steal a loaf of bread.

Having observed all this, it pains me that the litigious nature of our culture forces me to make the following disclaimer for my own personal protection: although some of the material in this book may relate to topics which are legally questionable,it is my understanding that while plants can apparently be declared "illegal," facts of nature and human ideas about them (correct or incorrect) are currently exempt from such classification. Everyone has the existential freedom to do what they choose with what they've read, but that has no connection with what I have written in these pages.

My responsibility ends where yours begins; readers who act on any information found in this book do so of their own free choice and volition and must accept all of the consequences of such decisions.

We are all on our own in the Shamanic dimensions, and you can thank the gods for that!

Notes

1. Harner, M. (1980). The Way of the Shaman, Harper & Row, San Francisco, p. 139.
2. McKenna, T. (1991). "Sacred plants and mystic realities," The Archaic Revival, Harper, San Francisco, p. 249.
3. Potterton, R. (1992) "A criminal system of justice," Playboy, September, p. 47.
4. Postel, S. "Denial in the decisive decade," Brown, L. (1992). State of the World, Norton, NY,p. 3, passim.

5. McKenna, T. (1992). Food of the Gods, Bantam,NY, p. 274.
6. McKenna, T. (1991). "Plan/Plant/Planet," The Archaic Revival, Harper, San Francisco, p. 219.
7. Moore, M. (1978). Journeys into the Bright World, Para Research, Rockport, MA, p. 53.
8. Ibid., p. 167.

Part One

THE SHAMANIC HYPOTHESIS

I haven't changed my mind that [the discovery of LSD] is the most valuable discovery that man has made. I think what we've learned in the intervening years is that this isn't for everybody... It requires much honesty -- since self-deception is so easy, but I don't see how anything can compare to discovering one's true nature and the magnificence of this marvelous universe we are a part of.
Stolaroff, M. (No date), quoted by Peter Stafford in Magic Grams: Inquiries into Psychedelic Consciousness, Rosetta Folios, Berkeley, p. 334.

Naive or recreational use of psychedelic drugs does not make one either a shaman or a saint. If this were true, the [San Francisco] Bay Area would have been overrun by saints and shamans in 1967. In traditional Shamanic societies, there exist specific traditions, histories, rituals and practices which provide a stable, long-term set and setting by which the drug experiences [are] interpreted and controlled. Gracie and Zarkov (1985) "Psychedelic drugs and shamanism," Notes From Underground, Berkeley, p.1

Chapter One
ALTERED STATES

[Researchers] have been impressed by the"universality" and sameness of psychoactivedrug experiences across cultures and history.
For example, Mandell (1978), after reviewing the experimental and clinical studies of common underlying neurobiochemical pathways in "transcendent states," suggested that "a world view [is] conveyed by using a brain chemical agent"[1]

Although this book is about the use of psychoactive plants to access non-ordinary states of consciousness, it would be a mistake to attempt such a study without first examining some psychological and philosophical implications emerging from their known effects. The Shamanic cultures using Psychotropic plants have near-universal belief systems about them and about the realms of consciousness which they disclose. This in itself is an amazing fact which suggests important clues about the structure of the human psyche. Nevertheless, these are realms seldom seriously examined by Western science -- it's almost as if there exists a taboo against considering evidence which, if validated, would completely overturn our concepts of who we are. This book will attempt in part to address this neglect.
The following twelve stories were chosen to illustrate some preliminary psychological data which are considered by mainstream science as anomalous or paranormal at best, as delusions or fraud at worst. They

are all personal, subjective life experiences of my own, and I have told them as truthfully as I know how, though the passage of many years may have warped my memory of some Psychedelic Shamanism specific details. (For example, I am not certain of the exact year for story number eight -- it could have been any time between 1970 and 1973.) The essence of each story, however, is presented exactly as it was hard-wired into my memory.

1. FIRST LSD TRIP-
The Heaven Universe

On October 25, 1964, from about 3:30 in the afternoon to approximately midnight, I experienced the effects of LSD for the first time. I was twenty- seven years old, a graduate student in English at San Francisco State College, living in Berkeley with my second wife. My friend Dick had obtained the drug from acquaintances associated with the soon-to-become-notorious author, Ken Kesey. In those days LSD was still legal, and a lot was being said about it in both the popular and underground press. Like many of my generation, I was intensely curious about this new substance which supposedly enabled one to experience a transcendent reality.

I swallowed the tiny tab of acid at Dick's family home in Lafayette, then laid back in an old easy chair while he puttered about the house, stopping in every little while to monitor the progress of my trip. Today we know that "set and setting" have a lot to do with how one experiences any psychedelic drug.

That is, the "set" of one's personal expectations and the "setting" or environment in which the drug is taken usually determine the quality and type of experience which will ensue.Although I was then ignorant of the set and setting concepts, their accuracy was borne out during this first LSD session.

At that time of my life, I was deeply interested in the Eastern religions, and when the drug overpowered my awareness I began to experience what can only be described as samadhi, "the final stage in the practice of Yoga, in which individuality is given up while merging with the object

of meditation." For the first, and alas, to date the only time in my life, I was "allowed" to experience the unspeakable bliss of total unity and integration. Subject and object became one -- there were no questions because all that existed was a pristine "answer" in and of itself,perfectly related to everything else in seamless unity.There was no good or evil, no right or wrong, only perfection in and of itself.
One of the most amazing parts of the experience was how simple and obvious this state of consciousness was; once having experienced such a truth, how could anyone ever see life in any other way? This must be the way God perceived things.
That was how it felt, and it was utter ecstasy.
Actually, it was much more than that, but the experience is ineffable, and words cannot capture it.
To this day I have wondered how such a state of consciousness can be so close to normal awareness,yet so difficult to attain and maintain.
Like any good Berkeley intellectual of that era, I had a pad of paper on which I vainly tried (once or twice, before giving it up as absurd) to express in
language what I was experiencing. I still have that piece of paper.
Here is the essence of what is written on it:

Koan: "How does one express the inexpressible?"
Answer: "Thank you!"
If you can follow that kind of "reasoning," you can perhaps get a vague idea of what was happening with me on that long ago afternoon.

LESSON: It is possible to experience a truly objective state of awareness, to leave subjective, differentiated, ego-awareness behind and dwell in perfect Oneness. Once experienced, this state of consciousness becomes the most precious thing one can seek to attain. I personally would give anything to be able to attain it permanently.

2. SECOND LSD TRIP -- THE HELL MULTIVERSE

On February 21, 1965, I had my second opportunity to experience the amazing effects of LSD. By then I had read Leary, Metzner and Alpert's -book, The Psychedelic Experience -- A Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead. This "manual" was an attempt to structure the psychedelic experience within the metaphor of those Tibetan scriptures which are traditionally read over a recently deceased corpse. Their intent is to instruct the confused human soul how to navigate the world of the bardo, the state of existence said to be experienced immediately after the death of the physical body.The analogy of course was that the psychedelic voyager should allow his ego to "die" by relinquishing all control to a trusted guide, who then selects appropriate verses to read aloud to him as the trip progresses. In theory, the subject will emerge from the experience "reborn" into a new and permanently higher state of consciousness, a sort of Instant Enlightenment.

In retrospect this seems like an incredibly bizarre concept for a trio of Harvard psychologists to lay on the unsuspecting American public of that time. Remember that, although it had already reached its half-way point, the tumultuous decade of the "sixties" had still hardly begun to define itself, and it was certainly items like a do-it-yourself LSD therapy manual modeled on an exotic and unfamiliar oriental doctrine that contributed to the quantum escalation of weirdness in the weeks,months and years soon to follow. It definitely was an instructive experience in my case, and I'd be curious to know how many bad acid trips this one book caused all by itself.

Now, I must confess that I didn't use the manual in exactly the manner prescribed, so that assuredly had a lot to do with the experience which ensued.

In the first place, Dick (the only person I knew at that time who had any experience with LSD) was not available to be my guide; second, my wife was extremely disturbed and threatened by my new-found interest in psychedelics, and very uncomfortable about participating in any way in my inner voyages. Consequently, not willing to wait until I could use the technique properly, I made a tape-recording of the manual, reasoning that I would be able to self-select the appropriate verses while under the influence of the drug. In retrospect this seems

incredibly naive, not to mention stupid, but as the saying goes: "It seemed like a good idea at the time."
In short, the grossly unfamiliar, electronic-machine sound of my "own" voice speaking such verses from the tape recorder as:

"None of the peaceful or wrathful visions,Blood-drinking demons, machines, monsters, or devils,Exist in reality Only within your skull..."[2]

became inexpressibly horrifying. Since the drug had just erased my ego, I didn't know who I was at that point and because the demonic images conjured up by the verses were actually me (didn't "my" voice just tell me that?) I, strange as it seems now, actually became afraid of myself! Not only afraid of myself, but afraid of everything around me --the walls, the floor, the bookcase, my hand, my shoes -- everything became a total threat to "myself," of whom I was also afraid and who besides that didn't exist anyway -- an appalling enough thought in its own right! Talk about double and triple binds! I was drifting in a confused sea of pure terror without any ego-structure to hold onto for reference. Only someone who has had a bad acid trip can understand what I'm trying to describe here.
In spite of the fact that it terrified me to do so, I went to bed with all of my clothes on, pulled the covers over my head, shut my eyes and assumed a fetal position, shaking in fear all the while. I don't know how long it was that the diabolical imagery continued, but it seemed like many hours. Then the sound of a familiar voice drifted in from the front room. Another friend had dropped by to visit me, and I bounded out of bed and grabbed his arm like a child, babbling that I was high on acid and going crazy and that he had to help me or I wasn't going to make it! Jack would just have to be my ego for a while.
Now, Jack was my oldest friend, whom I'd known since high school, and a very solid, very conservative guy who didn't even drink beer. He'd never had a drug experience of any kind, and naturally had no inkling of what a bum trip was. (Indeed, at this fairly early time in the sixties, the phenomenon was just beginning to surface -- few laypersons knew how to handle them.) He and I were hot-rod buddies, having misspent most of our teenage years during the '50s souping up old Fords. While

I'd moved on to other interests, Jack had become a professional mechanic who still devoted his spare time to building dragster engines. That evening he was on his way to the Oakland Roadster Show, then in progress, and had dropped by to see if I wanted to come along. He had no idea of what I was experiencing, and probably felt that it would do me good to get out of the house for a while. Just being in the presence of Jack's matter-of-fact self-assurance (uncomplicated by any understanding at all of the panic exploding inside my head), made me feel calmer almost immediately. "Sure, Jack, I'll go to the Roadster Show with you." My wife, seeing that I was suddenly much better, and with Jack there to assume responsibility for me, decided to come along. Now that I was "safe," the short drive from Berkeley to Oakland was one of pure psychedelic rapture. The neon signs and the weaving head and taillights of the cars on the freeway were indescribable works of enchantment and profundity.Jack was at the wheel and I didn't have to worry about anything. I could have been driven around the East Bay for the rest of the night in perfect bliss, but the others preferred the Roadster Show.

Those readers who can remember the American "Populux" culture of the mid-sixties will recall that there was a big "monster theme" on television in those days. The Addams Family and The Munsters were two very popular situation comedies, a one-joke genre in which all of the humor depended on the "irony" of horror-show monsters living in the American suburbs. Well, the "theme" of the Roadster Show that year included this monster motif, and when Jack and my wife and I entered the auditorium, we were greeted with such oddities as "rail-job" dragsters crammed with colossal chromed engines with black, plush-lined coffins for bodies and Frankenstein, Wolf-Man or Dracula dummies perched behind their steering wheels ...

"None of the peaceful or wrathful visions,
Blood-drinking demons, machines, monsters, or
devils,
Exist in reality
Only within your skull..."[3]

Stoned or not, these apparitions were not inside of my own skull and all of the convoluted acid-logic in the world could not make them disappear! I immediately flashed back into paranoid terror.
Here I was, trapped on a planet in which I was beset on all sides by radiantly satanic vehicles chauffeured by demonic effigies. In addition to that, we were instantly jostled along by a streaming multitude of sullen, tattooed youths wearing jet-black jackets sewn from cattle hides, faithfully followed by their garishly lipsticked and mascaraed consorts in skin-tight toreador pants, and all chewing obscenely huge cuds of gum as they paid adoration to four-hundred horsepower chrome-plated machinery consecrated to high speed and death ... Coffins,monsters, chrome ... death. I was not quite ready for death yet. It was utter psycho-spiritual devastation and my body trembled uncontrollably as we wandered among the exhibits. Jack was totally engrossed in engine talk with the exhibitors and was uncharacteristically obtuse about what I might be experiencing. I was quietly freaking out and nobody acknowledged it, let alone understood why. My wife held my arm and kept whispering to me that it wasn't nearly so bad as I thought. Had this all occurred an hour earlier, I might have demanded hospitalization, but by then I was descending from the effects of the drug just enough to be able to recognize in it all a wonderful metaphor for how I perceived my culture. (Set and setting again!) By an incredible effort of will, I managed to hold onto a semblance of sanity long enough to run the gauntlet of the Roadster Show and return home to bed where I sank into a fitful waking-dream in which I repeatedly reassured myself with the mantra:
"Never again will I ever take LSD! Never again will I ever take LSD!"
It was two or three days before I felt reasonably "normal" again, and about six months before I had integrated the experience enough to even consider another session with psychedelics. "Never say never."

LESSON: If the first trip was heaven, the second trip was hell. If the first trip was unity and love, the second was disintegration, fragmentation and fear.
As a popular song from that decade puts it: "I've seen the world from

both sides now...." Many years had to pass before I would manage to integrate those two visions, but one thing became certain within a very few weeks -- I never needed to fear anything ever again, because, psychologically at least,I'd already survived the worst it could possibly be.

3. A JOURNEY "OUT" of the "BODY"

On the night of November 11,1968, my wife and I were living in an upstairs flat at 1329 Cole Street in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district. That particular evening I was reading a book which I had purchased earlier in the day from the outdoor bargain table of a secondhand bookstore: Astral Projection, by Oliver Fox. I've since learned that this book is considered a classic of its kind, but then I knew nothing about out-of-body experiences other than that they were strange and interesting. Until that time, I had no real conceptions and few prejudices about the subject one way or the other. If anyone were to ask, I'd likely have replied with provisional skepticism that out-of-body experiences astral projections") were probably some kind of an illusion.

The book was fascinating, and had a ring of authenticity to it which impressed me deeply. In fact, I couldn't put it down, and I stayed up hours after my wife had retired so as to finish reading it in one sitting. In the book, Fox describes a method which he used to consciously leave his body -- this essentially involves "waking oneself up" while in the middle of a dream. He calls this the "Dream of Knowledge":

In order to attain to the Dream of Knowledge we must arouse the critical faculty which seems to be to a great extent inoperative in dreams...

Before going to sleep I must impress upon my mind the desirability of not allowing the critical faculty to slumber; it must be kept awake, ready to pounce on any inconsistency in the dream and recognize it as such.[4]

The technique sounded simple enough, so as I prepared for bed I resolved that I would attempt to awaken my consciousness within the first dream I had -- that very night. Why not? With high hopes I shut my eyes....

I have no idea how long I'd been asleep.

Suddenly I was aware that I was dreaming; there was a small white dog which began spinning like a top, a bizarre enough image, certainly a dream image.... Wake up!

BAM! I was awake. I was wide awake in bed, no longer dreaming, no longer asleep.

Awake, and very much still in my body. Well, that didn't work.

I'll try again. I dozed off.

I saw a huge champagne bottle with a label on it reading "AIR." It began whirling rapidly....

Wake up!

BAM! I was awake, in my room, my wife sleeping beside me, her face strangely flushed, and beside her in bed was... ME! I was passively floating above my body, and looking outward toward the doorway of our bedroom. Standing there was a young woman, perhaps nineteen or twenty years old, slightly overweight, Hispanic, with a dreamy Mona Lisa smile on her face.

There was something wrong with her. A very pale green "aura" surrounded her head and shoulders, projecting outward no more than two or three inches.

She was aware of my presence in a vague sort of way, but seemed quite preoccupied with something. She walked into the hallway. I felt myself floating in
that direction, a very strange (yet somehow maddeningly familiar) sensation.

Although the experience was certainly not identical to "normal" waking consciousness, in terms of being able to differentiate experience, I was as awake as I am now writing these words. I was astounded by what was happening to me and almost overwhelmed with the realization:

"I'm doing it! I'm projecting!"

I felt no fear at all. Indeed, the experience was exhilarating, in its way as fully numinous as my samadhi LSD trip almost four years previously.

Suddenly, the woman reappeared and I consciously and deliberately reached out to touch her to see if she was real (even though I understood from my reading of a few hours before that such an attempt at "astral" contact usually terminates the experience). I compulsively needed to know if she had substance. My hand went through her body as if it were air -- a most disquieting "sensation," or lack thereof!

BAM! An instantaneous change of scene.

No longer in our flat, I found myself standing in somebody's Upper Middle Class living room -- a large picture window with opened drapes overlooked what appeared to be the lights of the South Bay.(Later I deduced that this must have been somewhere down the peninsula, Menlo Park, perhaps.)It was no hallucination -- I can still see the furniture, the way the room was arranged. There were no lights on, but I could discern everything as clearly as if it were daylight. The room was suffused with a shadowless amber-golden glow. In the right foreground stood another young woman, about the same age as the first -- late teens, early twenties -- petite, pretty, short blonde hair, wearing a shortie nightgown. She was aware of and disconcerted by my presence in her home, but in a distracted, groggy, sleep-walking sort of way. Although in an altered state of consciousness,I was nevertheless in some sense fully awake -- she on the other hand was behaving like someone who was dreaming. Throughout the experience there was this sharp sense of difference between our respective awarenesses. She turned and moved down the hallway to my right.

I "willed" to follow her -- I don't know how else to describe it; it's not the same way one sets out to walk. I "floated" across the room and down the hall behind her -- a sensation like no other! You just "think" it, and you're in motion! On the way down the hall, I could see the half open door of a real (not a dream) bathroom -- towels hanging over a shower door... sink... toilet... some items of clothing crumpled on the floor....

At the end of the hall was another doorway -- somehow I "knew" that this was her bedroom. She stopped, turned, saw me floating there. Panic on her face! She flashed past me and "ran" back up the hallway. I certainly meant her no harm; I was high from the experience, intensely curious and trying to communicate or make some kind of connection. I

did a kind of flip in the air and drifted back toward the living room. She stopped at the endtable next to the couch and frantically grabbed something from an ashtray. I think it was a cigarette butt. (An astral cigarette butt?!) In panic she tried to force this item into my hand. From my point of view it was very clearly a dream-logic sort of thing for her to do; as if she were trying to make me disappear by forcing me to accept a cigarette butt!

As in the previous encounter, I reached out to touch her, compulsively needing to know if she actually had substance. (This compulsion was uncontrollable -- an indicator that I was not in full command of my experience, though certainly awake and conscious in a way I'd never been before.) I gently grasped her shoulder, expecting that everything would disappear, as Fox said it would in his book, but was surprised to find that unlike the first woman, this one was solid. In fact, it was just like touching a "real" person. I could clearly sense the texture of the nightgown and the warmth of her flesh beneath it.

To this point I was unaware of any intentions on my part (other than compulsive curiosity), but as soon as we made contact it instantly became a sexual thing, almost as if we had thrown a switch that energized a magnetic field of some kind. For the merest fraction of a second she pushed me away, then reversed polarity and just as strongly grasped me to her in a totally desperate embrace. I kissed her neck and was acutely aware of the feeling of my beard against her skin. (This was very, very real!) She hooked her legs behind mine and kissed my mouth passionately. There was no "penetration" in the usual sense, just a sudden, blinding blue-white flash of light uniting us for the briefest of instants, very much like that made by an arc welder... B-Z-Z-Z-T!

BAM! I was wide awake in bed, my wife asleep beside me; my chest was pounding so violently that I actually feared that I was having a heart attack. I could hardly catch my breath -- it felt like I'd just crashed into my physical body at the speed of light.

I arose and stumbled around the pre-dawn flat, trying to calm down; for some reason I was frightened. It wasn't the overwhelming fear of my second acid trip, but a kind of anxious disorientation; here I was, but I'd just been somewhere else -- who was I, and what was real? These familiar physical surroundings seemed strangely less authentic than

where I'd just been! Somewhere, perhaps only a few miles away, was there a pretty young blonde pacing around her living room trying to integrate what she could only remember as a very sexy dream? Good grief--I'd just cheated on my wife! It sounds silly to say it, but I actually felt guilty!

Every night for the next several weeks, and off and on ever since, I tried to duplicate that out-of- body experience. Although I have had various levels of "success" (usually very dream-like and uncoordinated), never to date have I managed to reproduce the clarity and relatively conscious control of that first amazing adventure. Over the years I have come to a rather "mystical" understanding of it. If I were able to access that kind of conscious, controlled experience at will, I very likely would do little else, and I now believe there is some wiser part of my psyche which does not want me off adventuring on the "astral plane" at the expense of my duties in the here and now.

LESSON: It is entirely possible to exist as a consciously perceiving entity outside of your physical body. The implications of this fact could hardly be more revolutionary. For anyone who has had such gnosis (i.e., has actually experienced it), the materialist position becomes instantly reduced to a partial truth at best, an intolerable illusion at worst. The "consensus reality" of the masses and their governments can then loom like a kind of enervating perceptual tyranny imposed upon the individual; many sixties seekers wound up dead or in prison because they were unable to wisely integrate this sudden alteration of their understanding.

4. AN INTRODUCTION TO SYNCHRONICITY

During the 1968 holiday season, I attended a party given by friends living a few blocks away from us in the Haight. It was a typical hip-intellectual gathering of that era -- a slightly older group,we considered ourselves more Beatnik than Hippie, though by then of course the neighborhood had been inundated by the latter. Naturally, there was an abundance of cannabis, beer and wine freely available. I was mildly stoned and enjoying myself. So was everybody else.

Someone was saying something about the I Ching. I had heard about the I Ching, the ancient Chinese Book of Changes, but had no comprehension of what it was. It was an entirely new concept to me, apparently some kind of fortune telling book that actually worked. I asked about it and everyone looked at me in disbelief."What! You've never used the I Ching?" A copy of the book appeared instantly. It was suddenly imperative for me to ask a question and get the I Ching's perspective on it; that was the only way to appreciate how it worked, how wonderful it was, etc.

Now I was fairly high, and also highly amused by all the enthusiasm being dumped on me about this Oriental oracle book. A question of some sort was being demanded of me. Well, OK... I pondered -- I was preparing to leave San Francisco within a couple of months for New Mexico. During 1966 and part of 1967 my wife and I had lived in Santa Fe, and I'd loved the state so much that I had purchased a house in one of the area's remote moun- tain villages. I really missed it; it felt like home to me, and I desperately wanted to escape from an increasingly alien California. My wife didn't share this enthusiasm, and we were reluctantly planning a trial separation, she to pursue her career in the Bay Area, and I to try to find myself on the land in New Mexico. It was a stressful time for us. We didn't really want to part, but at the same time we couldn't deny that our life paths were clearly branching in different directions.

I asked the I Ching if it was a good idea for me to leave for New Mexico. Everyone approved -- that was a wise question to ask of the oracle. At each successive throw of the coins, the interest of my friends began to increase, far in excess of what I might have expected.

What was the big deal? By the time I'd finished there was considerable excitement. I apparently had cast something very unusual -- Hexagram number 1, The Creative, with all six lines moving (whatever that meant). More than a decade later, I would become some- thing of an I Ching scholar, devoting many years to little else than its study. Only then would I realize that the very first hexagram I ever threw is arguably the most powerful omen one can get from the Book of Changes. The mathematical odds against throwing six changing yang lines are

astronomical, tantamount, I suppose, to one coin coming up tails eighteen times in a row. I have actually thrown coins in which one of them landed on edge and remained like that for over an hour, but I've never thrown six changing yang lines again, nor ever heard of anyone else doing it.

The book says:

There appears a flight of dragons without heads. Good fortune.[5]

Without belaboring the point, the symbolism suggests a kind of fated circumstance, something "decreed by heaven" in which powerful hidden forces guide the unfolding of events. The message was lost on me entirely, but subsequent incidents eventually convinced me that the I Citing's "answer" to my question on that long-ago stoned night in the Haight Ashbury was a highly accurate image of a major watershed in my life. At the time however, the really convincing message didn't come until February, two months later.

It was early morning, the sun barely up. I had a packed Jeep and fully loaded cargo trailer parked in front of our flat on Cole street, pointed downhill toward the freeway on-ramp with New Mexico in the misty distance. My wife and I had just said our painful goodbyes and I was feeling tremendous personal anxiety and ambivalence, mixed with a deep need to escape from this damned California city. The omnidirectional hum of commuter traffic pervaded the haze as I walked down those steps for what was to be the last time. A slight breeze blew a crumpled gum-wrapper along the gutter next to the Jeep, registering on my addled mind as a barely noticed flash of silver. Suddenly, a small hawk swooped out of the sky to strike at the tumbling tinfoil, only to drop it and land for a moment on the telephone wire above my head -- a wild Sparrow Hawk only a few blocks from downtown San Francisco!

He stared at me in his fiercely hawklike fashion for only a moment before taking off again. I felt privileged to see something so rare and chose to think of it as a favorable omen. (Not to make too much out of it, however; it was a delightful thing, highly unusual, yet certainly within the realm of natural events. I mean, I really didn't think God was

sending me messages or anything.)
I got in the Jeep and drove away.
Three days later, having pushed the overloaded and underpowered little Jeep across the Great American Desert at speeds sometimes exceeding 40 mph, I pulled into the muddy driveway of my place in New Mexico. An artist friend was house-sitting for me, and since there was no telephone, he only knew within a few days when I'd be arriving. As I shut off the tired little engine and got out of the Jeep to stretch, my friend emerged from the house with something in his hand. We greeted each other warmly, and he immediately held out his latest project, a painstakingly handcrafted, laminated brass Bolo Tie which was inset with pieces of ebony, ivory and turquoise. It was a beautiful traditional representation of the Egyptian God Horus, the hawk deity, which closely resembles the American Kestrel, or Sparrow Hawk. I was, in the argot of the era, "completely blown away" -- my journey from California to New Mexico had both begun and ended with a hawk! It wasn't as if we'd sat around and talked for several hours and then he dug out his project -- it was in his hand when he walked out the door upon my immediate arrival. I told him that I had to have it. I'd pay any price. Surprised, he said thirty-five dollars (a purely token payment). I gave him two twenties, and let him keep the change; it was just about the last money I had. I didn't yet know anything about Jung's concept of synchronicity, although I'd just experienced it for the first time.

LESSON: The LSD taught me that there are legitimate modes of perception which differ from what is loosely labeled "everyday consciousness."
Some of them make conventional human awareness seem trivial by comparison. The "astral projection" showed me that it is even possible to perceive from a position outside of one's physical body. The I Ching and hawk incidents strongly suggested that there are hidden forces, operating free of space/time concepts of causality, which can symbolically mirror and possibly even order subjective human experience. These forces seem in some way connected to consciousness itself.

5. ANOTHER LIFE AND THE ILLUSION OF TIME

By the winter of 1971. I had married for the third time, in the process acquiring two young step-children. We were living in my house in the mountains of New Mexico, trying to make a living as subsistence homesteaders. One bitterly cold January dusk we drove over to Taos to have supper with some friends of my wife. I didn't know these people very well, and when the husband arrived home late from his job as a ski instructor it was obvious that he was dead tired and had completely forgotten that we'd been invited to be dinner guests that evening. In short, he was barely civil to us, evoking in everyone, his wife in particular, an understandably awkward embarassment.

In an attempt to smooth out the social ambiance, she torched up a joint which was duly passed around among the adults at the supper table. It was a mistake for me to have smoked any, because I was not at all prepared for the unconscious wave of hostility which continued to emerge from our host.

This was totally non-verbal, unrelated to his overt behavior (which by then was quite civil), and was experienced by me as a palpable force which attacked my solar plexus -- sort of like psychically having the wind kicked out of me. Any Shamanic warrior" would have understood how to protect himself from this, but I was wide open and totally ignorant that such forces actually existed outside of Carlos Castaneda books.

Later I was to learn that this man had been studying Native American (especially Navajo) witchcraft for several years, but I must emphasize that at this point I don't think he was aware that he was doing anything to me -- the whole experience had a dark, unconscious quality to it. Also, I did know him well enough to be able to assume a general goodwill on his part -- when he wasn't tired and unconscious anyway. That didn't help me much, however. I'd already allowed the cannabis to open up my normal ego defenses and I began to feel like I was going to faint.

I quickly realized that I was actually in a state of shock and that I was

about to pass out! I stumbled from the table, blathering something about needing to "get some fresh air." The night-time temperatures in Taos had been hovering around twenty below zero for nearly a week, and this sudden concussion of coldness hit me like another blow as I stepped from the house. I lurched against the fender of our truck and had a brief vision of the milky way galaxy as specks of light frozen in a black void of lung-searing oxygen, then I was out cold, as they say.
This is hard to describe. I lived an entire human lifetime. Perhaps it was a memory of another life, because it seemed to take place in the Eighteenth Century -- lots of horse-drawn vehicles and people wearing period clothing. But that's not what seems important. What impressed me was that it was anentire life, from birth through old age and eventual death. And it progressed in "real time," -- it was not in any way speeded up. Yet, at the moment of my death at a relatively advanced age I awoke to find myself lying in a frozen Taos driveway next to the mud-caked tire of a 1970 Toyota pickup truck.
I had just fallen -- that memory came surging back like a tidal wave which washed away most (but not all) of the memory of my other existence.
The "lifetime" had occurred between the moment I passed out and the moment I hit the ground, a mere second or two of "our" time. I managed to stand up, take a few gulps of frigid air, and make my way back inside. To get a "reality check" on my time-sense, I asked how long I'd been gone. Every- one cracked up in stoned laughter -- you just left for Christ's sake! Then they saw my face and it was suddenly all solicitous concern -- here, you'd better lie down, do you want some water? Etc. They said that I had no color in my face at all. Although they were all still very stoned, I was stone sober.

LESSON: First, the unconscious psyche is to some degree autonomous, and it is important to be awar of how the psychic energy of others can affect one in unexpected ways -- emotionally, mentally and in some cases even physically. My host was familiar with techniques of Shamanic attack, and although I remain convinced that he never consciously intended to assault me, some portion of his unconscious was acting out his frustration at having to deal with dinner guests when he was

physically and psychically exhausted. Second, time is both relative and in some strange way connected with consciousness itself. Subjective awareness is all that we usually experience, and the word "subjective" is just another synonym for "relative." Relative to what, is the sixty-four thousand dollar question!

6. FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH A POWER OBJECT

Sometime during the winter of 1971, Peter, a good friend from Santa Fe, drove up to visit us for the weekend. He had obtained some "windowpane acid" and since this would be his first experience with LSD, he wanted me to be his guide for the trip.Flattered and touched by such a responsibility, I suggested that I take a threshold dose of mescaline so I could share his state of consciousness yet remain grounded enough to be able to help out should any problems arise. My wife volunteered to be the entirely sober backup for us both. The kids were sent to bed for the night.

Now Peter owned a curious metal cup given to him by an old girlfriend recently returned from India. She'd purchased it from a Tibetan refugee, and judging by the worn-down geometrical designs on its sides it was obviously extremely old, if not ancient. (How many human hands must hold a metal cup until the engraving becomes so indistinct you can hardly see it in places?) The cup had been made by somehow "weaving" strips of brass and copper together -- a watertight wedding of two dissimilar metals without any recourse to solder or brazing. Peter is a blacksmith and thus quite familiar with standard metalworking techniques; he confessed that he could not figure out how the strips of metal had been fused into a unity. Because the cup was special to him, he went outside and filled it up with snow to melt for swallowing the LSD. I took my capsule of mescaline with the water that was left.

We were both an hour or so into our respective trips. Peter was sitting on the living room couch deeply engrossed with the cup, but obviously OKand not needing any company at the moment. I retired to the bedroom at the other end of the house,and sat on the edge of the bed gazing out the window at the moonlight on the snow. It was one of

those tranquil psychedelic moments in which everything was meaningfully synchronized within my awareness and vice-versa. My reverie was abruptly interrupted by Peter entering the room.He thrust his cup into my hand and said, "Here -- check this out for a while!" Then he left. Nothing more -- no explanation or anything.

I was somewhat puzzled, but contemplated the cup in the moonlight streaming through the window, the only source of illumination in the room.

My god! What was this damned thing in my hands? The cup radiated energy of a sort that cannot be described in words. Sudden overwhelming fear -- reminiscent of my second acid trip -- then I regained control. The cup seemed to be inexpressibly evil, emanating power which I could easily perceive in my altered state of awareness, yet in no way comprehend. Then I saw clearly that the power was neither evil nor good. It was simply power which could be used (if one knew how) for whatever purpose one chose. I felt like a layman might feel sitting all alone at the controls of a Boeing 747 Jumbo Jet at 40,000 feet, power and implements of power (the switches, dials, controls) at my fingertips, but without the remotest idea of how to use any of it. For several minutes I went through a complex spectrum of emotions -- first fear, then fascination, then an ignoble, self-demeaning kind of avarice -- *I wanted that cup!*

For a brief flash I had the idea that murder would not be too high a price to pay for it! What? Kill my friend Peter so that I could steal his power object? I shook my head in revulsion -- the cup was not evil in and of itself, but the energy in it could evoke some very primitive desires. I went back out to the living room and silently returned it to him. You'd have to know Peter's sense of humor to appreciate the stoned grin on his face as I did so. He knew damn well what I'd just been through and he thought it was funny as hell!

From that day to this, neither Peter nor I have gleaned any more information about his cup -- where it came from (we presume Tibet), what itwas used for, how it was used, how to use it now -- it's all a mystery. I've hinted to Peter that I wouldn't mind if he left it to me in his will, though damned if I know what I'd ever do with it if he did.

LESSON: It is possible for inanimate physical objects to possess an energy akin to consciousness, or which can at least be perceived and manipulated by consciousness, if one knows how to do it without inflicting harm on oneself.

7.THE TELEPORTATION OF A MATERIAL OBJECT

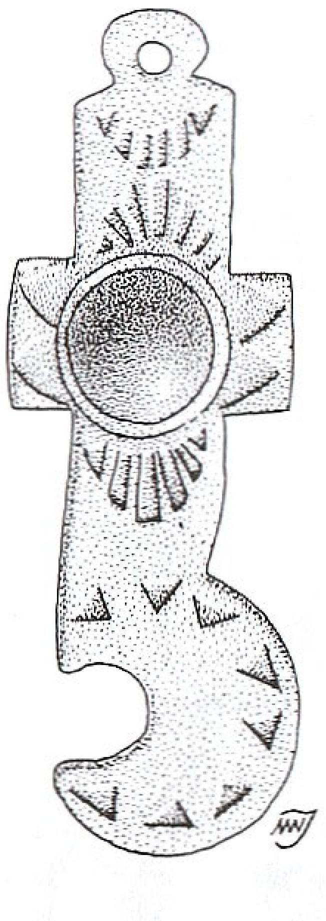


Figure 1-1
The author's "Coptic Cross"

When my third wife and I first began going together in 1969 she gave me a very unusual silver cross, made by an unknown Native American silversmith. If you can imagine a flattened-out sickle with a longish handle and truncated cross-piece bisecting it in the rough proportion of a Christian cross, you have a general idea of what it looked like. It was

about an inch long and had a tiny piece of turquoise at the nexus of the horizontal and vertical planes; there were also geometrical designs punched into the flat silver in several places. Someone told us that it was a "Coptic Cross," though I've never been able to confirm that -- in fact, I've never seen another cross that resembled it in any way. I wore it around my neck for less than a year until the chain broke and it was lost. This was in Santa Fe, sometime in 1970.

In the autumn of 1972 we were flat broke, and the survival homesteading bit was not living up to our romantic expectations. I accepted an offer to teach English at an exclusive private boarding school in Arizona. By the end of the first semester I had managed to break my right hand, which remained in a cast for ten weeks. All of the students had left for the Christmas holidays but we remained at the school, not wanting to return to wintertime New Mexico and wood-burning stoves when I was unable to either saw or chop firewood. In addition to the discomfort of having my hand ina cast, I began a month long series of cluster headaches, a chronic and excruciatingly painful condition that I've had off and on since I was sixteen years old. (For those unfamiliar with this phenomenon, it is generally held by clinicians that cluster headaches are significantly more painful than migraines.)

Needless to say, I was very stressed out, and those holidays were anything but pleasant for me.

In fact, I was going crazy; I have a ghastly memory of hammering on the wall with my cast in impotent anguish as a continuous white-hot blade of agony sliced through my brain for two consecutive hours, only to begin again two hours later. I screamed and wept; I prayed to a God I wasn't sure I believed in to forgive sins I wasn't sure I'd ever committed. My wife could do nothing except stand helplessly by while I went nuts. There was no painkiller that could touch this affliction; all that resulted from multiple-capsule doses of Seconal was that I was unpleasantly, stupidly stoned while left to cope with the undiminished torment in my head.

One morning, somewhere in the middle of all this, I walked into our bedroom and was astounded to find the long lost Coptic Cross lying in plain sight in the middle of the floor. It had not been there five minutes

earlier, and my wife and I pondered for hours trying to rationalize every way possible how it could have gotten there. The cross was lost in Santa Fe nearly three years previously. Since then we had lived in our home in rural New Mexico for a year and a half, then moved to faculty housing at an Arizona boarding school. The carpet had been vacuumed (with a school-owned vacuum cleaner) within the preceding twenty-four hours, and I had been in that room almost continuously for two weeks because of my illness. Where had it come from?

Now any scientific materialist worth his salt will easily discount the previous six tales as either hallucinations or coincidences. When I am in a skeptical frame of mind, I can do the same. These are fairly strange stories, and the vast majority of the time I live a conventionally straight life in a conventionally straight world. In other words, it is possible that I have an autonomous unconscious imagination, able to create strange illusions with which to amaze my ego. Be that as it may, I have never yet been able to explain how that cross wound up on our bedroom carpet years after I lost it in a city six hundred miles away. That was no hallucination and I am hard put to account for it.

One hypothesis which fits the facts reasonably well is that investigators have noticed how intense personal stress can initiate what is called poltergeist phenomena. In other words, psychic tension is often associated with the production of paranormal physical events. Jung has also noted that synchronicity experiences are invariably preceded by psychological stress. I was certainly stressed out when this incident took place, but the mechanism for how that could precipitate a long lost and all-but-forgotten object out of thin air remains a total mystery.

LESSON: Mind can interact with matter in ways which transcend space/time concepts of causality.

8. VISIT TO ANOTHER DIMENSION

In the summer of 1973, we returned to our home in the New Mexico highlands. Teaching English to rich high school kids was definitely not my cup of tea.

In the autumn of 73, I took LSD again after a gap of two or three years. For me, acid has never been a drug I've wanted to repeat very often. (In the thirty years since my first trip, I've probably taken LSD fewer than fifteen times.) I soon discovered that the psychological insights were often identical to previous trips, and the physical discomforts and harsh emotional states engendered by this synthetic chemical were becoming increasingly abrasive to my aging body and psyche. (Sometimes it felt like I'd just flushed my brain synapses with Liquid Plumber -- it's no accident that this psychedelic is nicknamed "acid!")

Nevertheless, I still believed that it was useful to check in with that state of consciousness from time to time to see where I'd been and where I was going.

On this occasion I found my awareness suddenly projected into a strange and not quite earthly place. Although it was earthlike, I knew somehow that it was not of this dimension. I was in a huge hall fashioned from hand-hewn logs, and in the company of a large group of men. They were more than a little frightening -- my initial sense was one of Nazi stormtroopers dressed up like leather freaks, but then, as if in corrective response to a misinterpretation, the scene instantly changed and I saw them as more akin to Viking warriors.

Once again the vision refocused itself -- they weren't exactly Vikings either, but they were definitely warriors of some kind, and they were seated around a plain plank table. At first my ego could only see them as evil and cruel, quite as one would expect an anti-war activist (which I had been for many years) to perceive guys dressed in animal skins and bearing weapons and armor. I was given to understand that I was a member of this fraternity, and I recoiled in horror at the thought.Again, as if to correct an error, whatever intelligence was playing this movie for my benefit immediately changed the perspective in some un-explainable way, and I saw that the warriors were not evil at all. In fact they were just the opposite -- in the poetic language of the vision, they were "ruthless in the service of the truth."

The best way I can explain this message is as follows: We humans are conditioned from birth to automatically repress our honest impressions and responses in order to maintain collective social illusions -- we don't

like to "hurt people's feelings" or be disagreeable, and in order to avoid cultural embarrassment we learn how to become compulsive and continuous liars. By the time we have reached adolescence most of us are so socially programmed that we are no longer even aware that we are doing this. (For an instructive example of the phenomenon, watch an old Shirley Temple movie and count the number of "white lies" and "noble denials" per minute.)

This fraternity of warriors was dedicated to perceiving, speaking and living the truth of its experience, without compromise and without regard to the consequences. I was awed, and in the years since that vision of reality in another dimension I've endeavored to live up to my understanding of their harsh creed. It isn't easy, and I'm still not that good at it. Consequently, many people in this dimension perceive me as a cold-blooded asshole -- as I say, I'm not very adept at it yet.

LESSON: There appear to be actual dimensions within every human psyche in which archetypal forces live out a distinctly separate reality from ego perception. The energy they represent is available for conscious use by the ego.

9. RETURN OF THE HAWK, AN INITIATION

On the afternoon of December 17, 1973, I was alone in the house when I heard a tremendous racket exploding out of the back yard. It sounded like our entire flock of ten chickens had suddenly gone berserk. I went to see what was wrong and opened the door to a bizarre scene indeed. There in the middle of the driveway was a large Goshawk, her talons sunk into one of our White Leghornhens, her wide wings caped around the chicken in a protective semi-circle. The hen was still alive, and the look on its face with its half-opened beak reminded me of the expressions on some of the more graphic Mexican crucifixes; it was all but a satire on agony and victimhood.

The eyes of the hawk were straight on me, and they were almost blood-red in color. I have never seen anything more fierce and untamable. The contrast between the presence, the spiritual beingness,of the two birds could not have been more polarized. I was

less than ten feet from the hawk and was amazed that she held her ground and didn't fly away. It was a stand-off for several moments -- I didn't really know what to do, and she obviously was not about to release her prey. On the other hand, I couldn't allow some hawk to eat up my chickens, so I took a tentative step or two forward, shouting and making shooing motions with my hands.

She sank lower and hunched her head down to monitor my advance with those terrible eyes. I stopped. What's going on here? Was she rabid or something? I confess to being more than a little afraid of her; no wild animal I've ever heard of will allow a human to approach that close to it. We were now about five feet apart, and I had visions of her flying into my face with her beak and claws. I backed off and retreated to the wood pile where I found a large piece of black vinyl plastic that we used for a tarp. My "plan" was to throw it over her, grab her through the plastic and then... I don't know... somehow figure out how to turn her loose without getting maimed in the process.

As I approached her holding the huge black expanse of tarpaulin, I fancy I must have looked like the spectre of death itself. She held fast until I was almost within range, then took off low between the Cottonwood trees. The Leghorn bolted for the chicken coop, apparently unharmed.

What an amazing experience! I couldn't wait for my wife and kids to return from town so I could tell them all about it. I went back inside the house.

Within five minutes the chickens were screeching again. What the hell? The hawk was back. This time I found her with her claws sunk into the mesh of one of our rabbit hutches, hanging from the wire while the white bunny inside banged around in total hysteria. I thumped on the side of the cage with a rake handle and this time she flew off only as far as the nearest Cottonwood tree. There she sat, twenty feet above me on a bare winter branch.

To make a fairly long story short, I threw big rocks at the tree trunk -- nothing. I threw smaller rocks at the tree branch -- she wouldn't budge.Then I tried throwing stones at her -- never managing to hit her, but she not moving in any event, just staring at me with those implacable red eyes. It was obvious that if I left her alone she would be

after my chickens immediately.

I got my .22 rifle and shot in the air over her head -- she didn't even flinch. I shot the branch next to her, chunks of bark flying at each hit. There was something actually calm about her aspect; she ruffled her feathers and looked away -- dare I say contemptuously? By then I had entered a strange altered state of consciousness, a kind of compulsive frenzy. What was the matter with this bird! I desperately did not want to kill her -- she was magnificent! I just didn't want her eating the chickens. For some reason my left-brain was unable to release that petty bit of pragmatism.

Then it came to a dreadful kind of understanding; either she got my chickens, or I killed her.

Within the larger situation there was an aura of cosmic indifference about whichever way it went; I was being confronted with a choice. It was ruthless truth time. Is it too mystical to say that her "choice" was clear?

This is a true story. I shot her. She didn't fall. I shot her again, a tiny puff of feathers flying from her breast. She did not fall! In the army I qualified as Expert Marksman, their highest category, and I was a member of my unit's rifle team. Ever since my teens I've been a "good shot," as they say.

This is a true story. I shot her seven times before she finally fell from the Cottonwood tree -- and yet she lived! By then I was almost crazy with emotions I can't even identify. On the eighth shot she died, the beautiful head blown into pulp at point-blank range. Utter grief swept over me. I had committed the most unforgivable of sins. A line from Robinson Jeffers seared through my brain:

"I'd sooner, except the penalties, kill a man than a hawk..."

Ruthless truth. I took the broken body inside.

That night I ate six peyote buttons and sat candle-light vigil with her corpse until dawn. I was given to understand that it was strangely all meant to happen. The years have brought further comprehension. It is really too personal to write about;some things are not to be shared.

About a year later I looked out our bedroom window to see another

Goshawk in the field next to the house. He had one of our Barred-rock pullets in his talons and was already pulling feathers and flesh from its body. I sat on the edge of the bed and watched until he was finished eating. Bon appetit,
Brother! The hawks can have all of my chickens they want -- to ever kill another would be more difficult for me than killing myself.

LESSON: Archetypal forces can coerce our choices for purposes beyond immediate understanding. At such times one is enabled to intuit a transcendent unconscious program in process, one in which the ego is a secondary component.

10. THE VOICE

Of all of the stories in this introduction, this is the one which is for me the most mysterious and has had the strongest impact on my life.
On the morning of February 18,1979 I took LSD again after a gap of about three years. As I sat in my easy chair waiting for the effects of the drug to begin, I felt a sudden impulse to get up, go into the next room, and remove an antique Mexican machete from where it had been hanging on the wall for at least a decade. Like many items used only for decoration, this one had by now become so familiar as to be invisible. I don't recall having paid any real attention to for it for years. Indeed, it was shamefully covered with dust.
I'd purchased this machete in 1965 at the Toluca Market outside of Mexico City. It was hanging in the back of a stall operated by a used tool and parts vendor who sold battered hammers, bent screwdrivers, grease-caked Crescent wrenches, rusty motorcycle chains, that sort of thing. The machete : obviously fairly old (I estimate early 20th Century, around the time of the Mexican Revolution), and well used, with many nicks and scratches and a splintered handle. There is a "dicho," or proverb engraved on the blade: Nada del mundo es vedad por lo que mi ojos ven.
In English we would Translate it, "Nothing in the world is true that meets the eye," or, more freely, "Everything is an illusion."Its a curious saying; I've never thought of it as a typically Mexican Catholic

sentiment. If anything, it sounds Buddhist.

For some reason I wanted to hold this machete, and as the LSD began to alter my consciousness I held it tighter and tighter -- like Peter's Tibetan cup, it was beginning to manifest the energies of a power object." Soon it felt like the machete was some kind of psychic lightning rod for forces to enter my body. At that point I don't think I could have let go of it if I'd wanted to.

Now the drug was coming on strong and I was suddenly very, very stoned. The machete vibrated with authority and seemed to pull me from my chair, across the room and out the door into the yard, where I was forcibly thrown to my knees on the ground. For the first, and so far the only, time in my life I heard a distinctly clear voice speaking to me from within my own head. The voice was nothing that I could identify with as "me" or even a portion of "me." It was totally Other, and it asked a question:

"Do you take responsibility?"

I didn't really know what that meant -- take responsibility for what? Yet I knew that it was important to say yes -- taking responsibility was certainly a "responsible" thing to do, and I've always believed in being responsible.

"Yes."

The energy level of the voice increased one full octave:

"*Do you* take responsibility?"

"Uh -- sure. Yes." I was deeply intoxicated, and quite confused by the repetition of the question.

Now the numinousness and power of the voice doubled again, becoming suddenly very, very scary. What was I dealing with here?

"*Do you take responsibility?!!!*"

"Yes! I take responsibility!" I had no idea what I was taking

responsibility for, but I knew that I must be equal to it, whatever "it" was.

Now we crossed the line into "something else" -- these goddamned acid trips! Why did I continue to do this to myself? Flashback replays of my second
voyage into LSD terror.... It was now nothing less than the voice of God demanding:

"DO YOU TAKE RESPONSIBILITY?!!!"

I was no longer sure that I wanted that much responsibility, yet somehow I felt certain that if I'd said "no," I would have dropped dead on the spot.The voice's unstated implication was: "take responsibility or die!" In that state of consciousness I really believed it.

"YES! YES! I TAKE RESPONSIBILITY!"

The voice fell silent. After a while I got to my feet and stumbled back into the house. The rest of the trip was relatively uneventful -- lots of somatic electricity and Liquid Plumber sloshing around in my head. A local FM radio station played a piece by Alan Hovhaness, Mountains and Rivers Without End -- powerful music to hear while on a psychedelic. By late afternoon I'd drifted back into normal awareness again. I was very glad to be back.

That night I went to bed somewhat washed-out from the acid, but fully recovered and in consensus reality again. I'd been down for several hours, in fact. I had a dream:

My machete was in front of me, hanging suspended in a pure void of infinite darkness. Etched on the blade were Hebrew letters in living fire. I am not Jewish, and I don't know Hebrew, but I can recognize those letters and differentiate them from Sanskrit or Greek characters, for example. The machete disappeared and only the fiery letters remained suspended in the void. Then they began to move and re-form themselves in the Roman alphabet to spell "SEPHIROTH," in fire. Then they disappeared and only the void was left.

I awoke, my heart pounding anxiously. (Why was I afraid?) I got up and

walked around the house. What did "sephiroth" mean? I looked it up in *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* -- no such word. This was the most powerful dream I've ever had, a once-in-a-lifetime kind of dream. (It was a bonafide dream and not an out-of-body experience, which is quite different.) It was easily as numinous as my encounter with the voice, but unfortunately I didn't know what it meant any more than I knew what it was that I'd taken responsibility for. It was to be at least two weeks before I got a clue.

I was aimlessly browsing in a Santa Fe book store. I saw a book with a title like *Dictionary of Occult and Mystical Terms* -- something like that.

Ah ha! Maybe here I can find out what "Sephiroth" means. I turned to the proper page -- "Sephiroth:

The ten emanations of God in the Jewish Kabbalah." I was stunned -- I had heard of the Kabbalah, and knew it was some kind of Jewish mystical system, but that was as far as my knowledge went. How could my unconscious psyche come up with information that I had never consciously encountered in my life?

Needless to say, I obtained some books about the subject. I forget the reading sequence now, but Dion Fortune's *The Mystical Qabalah* and *Gareth Knight's A Practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism* stand out in my mind as particularly seminal texts.("Kabbalah" is spelled in at least five variants,"Qabalah" being one commonly used in England.)It was in Knight's book, over a year later, that I encountered the final synchronicity for this experience.

Without trying to explain the intricacies of kabbalistic philosophy, of which/there are many (to say the least!), I discovered that my machete/voice adventure corresponded to the "17th path on the Tree of Life." This path is called "A path of choice, the crossroads of life meet here" (e.g., "Do you take responsibility?"). The Tarot arcanum symbolically connected with this path is The Lovers, and the Hebrew word-letter for The Lovers is "zayin," which means "Sword." (A machete is certainly a kind of sword.) The drug ergot is also closely associated with this path, and LSD, of course, is an ergot derivative.

That's a fair amount of synchronicity compressed into an event which is still not totally clear to me, but I am apparently in good company;

years after my "kabbalah trip" I found this observation concerning LSD therapy in Stanislav Grof's book, Realms of the Human Unconscious. He is describing here how others under the influence of LSD have had experiences similar to my own:

Individuals unfamiliar with the Kabbalah have had experiences described in the Zohar and Sepher Yetzirah [two classical kabbalistic texts] and have demonstrated a surprising familiarity with kabbalistic symbols.[6]

LESSON: It was this experience which finally convinced me that I was somehow involved in an ongoing inner process. I eventually accepted the concept that the conscious "me" was but a portion of a greater reality which was unfolding itself from what I perceived as my own unconscious psyche.

Somewhere within this undifferentiated "unconscious" was a separate intelligence ("me" on a higher octave?) able to manipulate information superior to anything I knew here in space/time. I didn't come to these conclusions immediately, of course. It took several years for the hypothesis to fully congeal.

11. POSSESSION BY AN ARCHETYPE

In July of 1979, I was given an opportunity to understand how "ruthless truth" needn't be enforced by violence -- indeed, understood correctly, it probably never is.

That summer, I was engaged in an on-going feud with a neighbor concerning his livestock breaking into our garden. On this occasion, two of his horses had breached the fence and were trampling about in the corn. I completely lost all reason and shot one of the horses in the rump with a pellet-rifle, doing it no serious injury, but childishly indulging my outraged frustration with what had become an intolerable source of annoyance.

New Mexico tradition states that livestock are fenced out, not fenced in. This means that the burden of protection lies with the gardener, not with the owner of the stock -- a typical frontier concept, absolving

ranchers of any real liability for the depredations of their animals. Newer laws no longer acknowledge this idea of the "open range," but tradition dies hard, and more than a few murders have been committed in our area over this very issue. Since I endorse a belief system in which each individual takes full responsibility for his own life and property, I've always resented the notion that I was obligated to build fences to protect myself from my neighbors' wandering cattle, sheep, horses and even (on occasion) pigs.

What happened in this instance was that in my anger I'd inadvertently pumped the weapon to an excessive pressure and the pellet had broken the horse's skin, causing it to bleed. Its owners, seeing the wound, thought that I'd shot the horse with a 22 rifle. I suddenly found myself confronted in my own back yard by the neighbor's two enraged teen-aged sons, 16 and 18, each ready to kill me because of what they thought I'd done. For my own part, I was still furious about the constant problem with their animals, and in no way ready to be conciliatory with them. We all began shouting immediately -- I had the pellet-rifle in my hands, and some part of me was more than willing to use it as a club, even cold-bloodedly calculating how it compensated for the differences between our respective ages and strength -- indeed giving me the advantage because in that crazy moment I was quite ready to bludgeon to death these two punks, and even lusted for it. We were all insane in our rage and the situation was only a hair away from the spilling of blood.

Then something happened. "I" was suddenly shunted aside, and an authoritative and calmly reasonable voice began speaking through me. My entire personality changed and I spoke in a way that ruthlessly acknowledged all of the truths in the situation, briefly outlining the past events leading up to this moment, fully owning my contribution to the present incident and pointing out the choices we had for the future of our relationship as neighbors. Slowly the energy changed -- what had been a potentially-fatal confrontation evolved into a relatively calm discussion of a real problem. By the time it was over, we were all shaking hands with mutual respect. Within a month all the fences were repaired (by them) and never again did their livestock ever enter our property. Today, if not best friends, we are at least good neighbors.

What is interesting to me is that as soon as the discussion was over and I'd returned to the house, the calm and reasonable presence left me and I found myself in a brief state of dazed dissociation.
My wife and stepson, who had been witnesses to the entire affair were quite amazed, my wife stating that she'd never seen me behave like that before; her astonished tone of voice said far more than her words: *"I don't believe it!"*
For a little while I was quite the hero, but unfortunately it wasn't long before my belligerent ego was back fuming and posturing about how "I didn't have to take any shit from punks like that," etc.It was only then that it dawned on them that "whoever" had handled the incident so admirably was not my everyday self.
Remembering the event today, I shudder at how close I came to irreversible tragedy in my life; the way the energy in that situation was accelerating,someone, probably not me, would have wound up dead or in the hospital, and I'd be serving a long term in prison with the burden of murder on my conscience. I sincerely believe that some stronger, higher component of my psyche, seeing that I couldn't handle the predicament without disaster, stepped in to save me.

LESSON: A superior portion of the psyche(Jung's "self"?), is capable of intervening during crises to protect the physical entity from harm.

12. MARKS IN THE SNOW

The years passed. The kids grew up and left the nest. After thirteen years of marriage, my third wife and I divorced and I dwelled at home alone in an increasingly introverted world. By then I'd become obsessed with kabbalistic philosophy and so compulsive about my "inner work" that I went to bed with a microphone next to the pillow so that I could tape-record my dreams, becoming so proficient at this that I often recorded as many as eight per night. It sometimes consumed most of the next day just to compile all this data in an expanding shelf of spiral-bound notebooks. I dropped contact with my friends, sometimes not leaving the property for over a week at a time. Because of the modest income from some bonds left to me by my father I disciplined

myself to be able to subsist on only $100 a month for almost six years. I easily and without discomfort forswore all drug use, including cannabis and alcohol, for nearly a decade; it was the purest of all purist trips-- dreams became my new alternative reality.

Dreams and the I Ching. Because I never again heard that inner voice demanding my total "responsibility," I substituted for it the insights of the Chinese oracle and soon reached the point where I could hardly make the simplest decision without consulting it. I recorded minute footnotes on every question and every answer and began a huge compilation of cross-referenced data, some of it substantial, some of it trivial. I believed that I was on a "spiritual path," and indeed I was, for a while anyway. But such compulsive introversion is by definition pathological and it didn't take long for me to slide into a deep enslavement to progressively stranger belief systems.

Celibacy, for example -- I developed the unshakable notion that sexual abstinence was essential for my inner growth. My dreams and the I Ching confirmed and reinforced this over and over again. This was to be my greatest test. I believed that it was my ego's duty to meet the challenges of what I interpreted as instructions from my deepest core, my inner self. (By that time I'd become completely immersed in Jungian theory and easily contrived to use my interpretation of Jung's ideas to warp and rationalize every strange image emerging from my psyche.) I was in service to my Self (with a capital "S" as opposed to Jung's lower-case spelling), and whatever this portion of my psyche wanted, I was prepared to provide.

To give just one example of the kind of reality I lived during those years: I'd met a young woman who was renting a house across the field from mine. She was intelligent, attractive, and very modern. I was "being celibate," and finding it difficult.

One evening she came over to visit and finally asked me point-blank if she could spend the night. I explained to her about the "path" that I was on, acknowledging that I was very much attracted to her, but that I was trying to obey the will of my "*Self*." In the fashion typical for me at the time, I said, "Let's throw the I Ching and see what it has to say about this situation." She thought that was a good idea, and threw the

coins herself. The answer?

Hexagram number forty-four with no changing lines. One of the translations for the title of this figure is "*Temptation*." The Judgement says:"*Temptation* shows a female who is bold and strong.
It will not be good to marry such a female." My friend was shocked and puzzled -- "Does that mean me?" I laughed ruefully. The answer was totally typical, totally consistent with my experience, and as far as I was concerned only a fool would ignore it. We managed to stay friends on my terms, and I think she even respected me for it, since it was obviously not an easy path for me to follow.

By late 1984, I was probably clinically insane. I could barely take care of my simplest needs; I was enslaved to a concept that still isn't clear to me, but which remained entirely consistent in my experience -- some force within me or outside of me, or both, was forcing my resolution to the breaking point.

One cold winter night, I was awakened by the awesome sound of a large animal in pain, a belowing, roaring sound, something like a wounded bull perhaps. It terrified me to discover that the sound was coming from my own mouth!

I slept restlessly for the rest of the night, and at dawn stepped outside to a fresh snowfall. Everywhere I looked was an unsullied blanket of white,too recent to yet be marked with the tracks of animals or people -- except for around my house. The first mark I saw was a long line scratched in the snow, as if drawn by a child with a stick. But there were no tracks next to it, and it began and ended within about thirty feet. Then there was another one, shorter, only three or four feet long. Then more. I walked all over my property to witness dozens of these strange, aimlessly meandering lines in the snow, varying from only a few feet to over fifty feet in length, beginning and ending nowhere.There were none in the fields surrounding my property. The only marks were within my own fence-line -- all else was pristine, unmarked whiteness.

Where did such random calligraphy originate? How were the lines drawn? They were all an inch or more deep and there were no tracks next to them. Someone leaning down from a low-flying helicopter could have made such scratches with a long stick, but that was a patently

absurd hypothesis.
The only explanation that makes plausible sense is the one that extreme stress can sometimes cause poltergeist phenomena. It was at about this point that I began to realize that I was headed for disaster if I stayed on this "path" I'd chosen. Nevertheless, strong belief systems are not easily eradicated, and it was to be two more years before I could finally pull myself away from even the harshest of my obsessions. I still carry their scars in my psyche, and never expect to be entirely free of their effects.

LESSON: Not every image of power or intelligence within the psyche is benign or useful. In Jungian terms, if we have a self that seeks integration, we also have many autonomous complexes pursuing their own agendas.

This book is an examination of how psychotropic plants can elicit the deepest levels of human awareness and how the Shamanic societies which routinely use such plants, no matter how widely they may be separated by space, time, or cultural diversity, have remarkably consistent beliefs about the plants' powers and the realities which they evoke.
Perhaps the most ubiquitous complex of beliefs addresses the notion that each plant species contains a "spiritual entity," usually regarded as a teacher, able to communicate with the person ingesting the plant. The following quotation by an anthropologist, one of many I could have chosen from an abundant body of literature, sums up these common ideas:

Aside from the psychological effects of drug use, we see from the data presented... that many of the societies exhibit belief systems that approach universality. For example, the belief in animated spirits of hallucinogenic plants recurs throughout the samples... The shaman may call upon such forces to protect his
community. At times, such spirit forces have been considered more powerful than man and have been viewed as a means of communicating

with the realm of the supernatural, rather than experienced as forces which could be controlled.[7]

Historically, most Westerners have regarded these beliefs with condescension -- such "naive" world views are not included within the general reality-construction of modern scientific thought.
As the preceding twelve personal experiences suggest, however, at the very least we should acknowledge that not all of the data is in yet on the nature of human consciousness. Indeed, human awareness is a mystery of such magnitude that it is prudent to admit that we know virtually nothing about the subject at all! This ignorance plus our passion for logical explanation often compels us to replace one hypothesis with another one equally extravagant:

The Mazatecs say that the [Psilocybe cubensis] mushrooms speak. If you ask a shaman where his imagery comes from, he is likely to reply: I didn't say it, the mushrooms did. No mushroom speaks, that is a primitive anthropomorphization of the natural, only man speaks, but he who eats these mushrooms, if he is a man of language, becomes endowed with am inspired capacity to speak... At times it is as if one were being told what to say, for the words leap to mind, one after another, of themselves without having to be searched for: a phenomenon similar to the automatic dictation of the surrealists except that here the flow of consciousness, rather than being disconnected, tends to be coherent: a rational enunciation of meanings... For the shaman, it is as if existence were uttering itself through him.[8]

Despite the "as if" disclaimer, it seems at least as implausible to hypothesize "existence" speaking through one as the spirit of a mushroom. The point is that the main question remains unaddressed, and that is: How is it possible for some "other," some "not-me" to speak to me from within my own psyche? The "naive" explanation is that there must exist somewhere another world, another entire multiverse perhaps, from which invisible yet intelligent entities are able to communicate with us. This hypothesis is labeled "dualism" by scientific thinkers and is generally regarded as anathema to rational discourse.

Nevertheless, fresh insights into complex subjects can often be gained by examining their simplest explanations without preconceived ideas. Since it's all a Mystery anyway, what useful data might we acquire by provisionally accepting the notion that plants are sentient entities able to communicate with those who ingest them, or alternatively, that the molecules within certain plants can evoke dissociated incorporeal intelligences within the psyche that present themselves as sentient teachers?

That's a lot of what this book is about, but before I can ask the reader to accept such radical premises, I must first create a foundation for how it might be made plausible for sober consideration. The following hypotheses, based upon empirical experience, provide a starting point for the discussion which follows.

1. The human psyche transcends corporeal existence, therefore we must be multi-dimensional entities.
2. The ego is not the center of the psyche, but only the space/time portion of a greater reality which unfolds and reveals itself from what the ego perceives as its own unconscious mind.
3. Space/time is a partial reality and the materialist position is an illusion if taken literally.
4. Consciousness is a form of energy.
5. Since matter and energy are relative manifestations of the same basic phenomenon, in some dimensions matter is energy and vice-versa, therefore:
6. In some dimensions thoughts are "physical" entities.
7. In the dimensions tangential to ego-consciousness, these incorporeal intelligences must experience realities which are normally unconscious to ego perception.
8. As they "go about their lives," these hidden forces, operating outside of space/time concepts of causality, often symbolically mirror the ego's subjective experience in the physical realm. (Synchronicity)
9. The psychic energy of others, consciously or unconsciously focused, is able to directly affect one both psychologically and physically.
10. Time is relative to, and inextricably connected with, consciousness

itself.

It should be noted that each of these hypotheses supports the Shamanic concept of reality, a world view often accessed, enhanced and informed by the use of Psychotropic substances.

Notes

1. Lukoff, et al. (1990)."Transpersonal psychology research review: psychoactive substances and transpersonal states," The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, Vol. 22:2.
2. Leary, et al. (1964). The Psychedelic Experience, A Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead, University Books, New Hyde Park, NY, p. 139.
3. Ibid.
4. Fox, Oliver (1962). Astral Projection: A Record of Out-of-the-Body Experiences, University Books,New Hyde Park, NY, pp. 34-35.
5. Wilhelm, R., and Baynes, C. (1967). The I Ching,Bollingen Series XIX, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, p. 10.
6. Grof, S. (1975). Realms of the Human Unconscious, Viking, NY, p. 201.
7. Dobkin de Rios, M. (1990). Hallucinogens: Cross-cultural Perspectives, Prism Press, Dorset, England, pp. 193-199.
8. Munn, Henry (1973). "The mushrooms of lan-guage," in: Harner, ed., Hallucinogens and Shamanism, Oxford University Press, London, p. 88.

Chapter Two
SHAMANIC DIMENSIONS

I believe that the best map we have of consciousness is the Shamanic map. According to this viewpoint, the world has a "center," and when you go to the center -- which is inside yourself -- there is a vertical axis that allows you to travel up or down. There are celestial worlds, there are infernal worlds, there are paradisiacal worlds. These are the worlds that open up to us on our Shamanic journeys, and I feel we have an obligation to explore these domains and pass on that information to others interested in mapping the psyche. At this time in our history, it's perhaps the most awe-inspiring journey anyone could hope to make.[1]

An unbelievable number of books and articles have been written about shamanism within the last two decades. For the purposes of this discussion, all we need to know about the subject is found in the above quotation. In essence, the Shamanic map of the psyche posits the existence of "higher dimensions" of reality which are accessed via consciousness.

Nevertheless, notice how the quoted definition is still structured in three dimensional terms; the body is implicitly a vessel containing the psyche which is also a vessel containing a hierarchy of upper and lower worlds which are accessed via a central vertical axis. It is a kind of Chinese box image-- worlds within worlds within worlds. Given our physical restriction to three-dimensional space, this is probably as good

a metaphor for transcendent realms of experience as most of us can easily visualize.

"Dimension" is a word so overused that often we don't consider it carefully enough. What exactly does it mean? Since an understanding of the concept is crucial to our comprehension of altered states of consciousness, let's facilitate this discussion with another definition:

It is possible to imagine a point as having zero dimensions, a line as having one dimension (length), a surface as having two dimensions (length and breadth), and a solid figure,such as a cube or sphere, as having three dimensions (length, breadth, and height).... What we mean today by a solid object, or a "material" object, is an object that is three-dimensional in
the Euclidean sense.[2]

From this definition we see that each ensuing spatial dimension is structured in a direction perpendicular to the one preceding it. (The word perpendicular refers to a line or plane at right angles to another line or plane.) This unfolding sequence is a consistent principle, an equation for the erection of higher dimensional structures. Hence, a one-dimensional line is perpendicular to a zero-dimensional point; a two-dimensional plane is perpendicular to a one-dimensional line, and a three-dimensional cube is perpendicular to a two-dimensional plane. If the principle is constant, it should point the way to four-dimensional space. The logical question is: which "direction" is perpendicular to a cube?

This is impossible to visualize externally because we are subjectively perceiving from three-dimensional space. It is easy to comprehend a point, line, plane and cube; indeed, any child can readily discern spatial dimensions below three, but even mystics get confused when trying to describe four-dimensional space. I thus use the term "perpendicular" in a special sense to convey the idea of being at any angle or direction that transcends the boundaries of a dimension. (The geo-metrical idea of "right angles" is not necessarily relevant to the concept except as an aid to visualization.)

Being denizens of three-dimensional space it is extremely difficult for

us to imagine what could be perpendicular to a cube; no external direction would be more than another three-dimensional projection. Does the analogy of "perpendicularity" break down when dealing with spatial dimensions higher than three? Logical consistency demands that the principle must hold -- but how?

Taking a hint from the Shamanic model of reality, it is a startling realization to discover that the only logical direction "perpendicular" to three dimensional space is "within." This is made clearer when we realize that we cannot subtract the observer from the equation or forget that subjective perception is the foundation upon which all observations are made. Perception from a "center" or "point" (the subjective psyche) comes first, and the three external dimensions radiate from that point.

That one can observe three dimensions without putting the observer in the center (i.e., I can observe the three dimensions of a house without being inside of the house) confuses the issue, but does not negate the fundamental truth that *I am always at the center of the space/time surrounding me*.

This insight immediately opens the Shamanic world to our understanding and suggests that *consciousness itself is a multi-dimensional phenomenon!* The fact that each observer is at the center of his/her experience implies a "backstage" realm (the"unconscious") from which discrete awarenesses are projected into physical space. This lends credence to Jung's concept of the so-called collective unconscious or objective psyche, not as a state of consciousness alone, but also as a location, or hierarchy of locations, in extradimensional space. The following quotation describes the almost universal Shamanic conception of the "three worlds." It goeswithout saying that both the Upper and Lower worlds are internal (perpendicular), to the Middle "external" world of space/time:

For most Shamanic cultures, the universe is
believed to be composed of at least three levels:
the Middle Realm is the world as we know it,
the world of normal human events; The World
Below, the Underworld, can be associated with

the dead and dangerous spirits; and the Over
World, the Celestial Realm, is frequently characterized as the abode of the Sun, in some places
the realm of transcendent consciousness.[3]

This makes the physical body a kind of vessel which "contains" higher dimensional constructs. In three-dimensional terms it is logically absurd for a vessel to be smaller than its contents, yet this is not an inevitable conclusion if other dimensions are factored into the equation. Another way to conceptualize this is to think of space/time as the "outer" projection of an inner infinity. Imagine what it would be like to be a two-dimensional entity living on one of the six faces of a cube. Although it isn't immediately obvious to you, your world is actually tangential to five invisible two-dimensional universes" similar to your own, each with its unique population of beings. Imagine that turned inside-out, in three-dimensions, and you get an intuitive grasp of how we can access other realms from within.

It may take a while to integrate these insights, but once they become obvious, almost everything mysterious" about Shamanic and other altered states of consciousness becomes not only plausible,but self-evident and necessary.

As large as the universe outside, even so large is the universe within the lotus of the heart. Within it are heaven and earth, the sun, the moon, the lightning, and all the stars. What is in the macrocosm is in this microcosm.[4]

Another route to understanding these ideas is to approach them in terms of the difference between subjectivity and objectivity. First of all, authentic objectivity is impossible for any differentiated subjective) observer. Indeed, if such a state of perception were possible, there would be no question about what is "true," since the truth would be obvious to all observers. Therefore, since we cannot be objective, except in a relative sense, "objectivity" must be a function of the imagination. That is, I can imagine what objectivity is,but I cannot be objective in any true or ultimate sense, except intersubjectively," which is to say, in accordance with socially imagined

rules, such as the scientific method. This consensus objectivity is indispensible for daily living, but we must not forget that it is only an abstraction (like money) created to facilitate social intercourse.

The first fact of life is that it is always a subjective experience; there is no way this can be denied or avoided. Which is not to claim that there is no objective cosmos, only that all our experience of it is subjective. To imagine what the objective multiverse might be like, we can postulate that it is the sum total of all subjective experiences of it, plus what it is "in itself," as universe. Even the imagination balks at such strenuous conceptualization; to see the universe objectively (i.e., as universe), one would have to be outside of it!

Nevertheless, we can observe one and two dimensional space relatively objectively because we are perceiving "from above and outside" as it were. It is more difficult to see three-dimensional space in this way because of our embodiment within it. It follows that to really be able to discern three dimensions "objectively," one would have to perceive them from an "outside" perpendicular direction, that is, from a fourth spatial dimension.

Integrating these insights into our Shamanic model, we see that for human beings, spatial dimensions of three and less are external, and dimensions higher than three are internal. Hence, for us, all spatial dimensions higher than three are mental or psychic. It follows from this that a four-dimensional being would be experienced subjectively by a three-dimensional being as an inner voice or hallucination, as an interior phenomenon.

Pause for a moment and try to imagine four-dimensional space. It is right next to you, but in a direction you can't point to. No matter how well hidden you may be, a four-dimensional creature can see you perfectly well, inside and outside.[5]

Leaving aside for the moment the probability that some entities, such as UFOs, can "holographically" project themselves into our physical space, the only higher-dimensional entities that human beings usually encounter are internal, an obvious example being the "inner

voices"heard by schizophrenics. The fact that consciousness is a subjective trans-dimensional bridge linking many realms, explains why Shamanic states cannot be measured in three-dimensional terms; although our imagined protocols may be in some sense "objective," it is impossible to objectify the consciousness trying to measure itself by them! It is precisely because consciousness is multi-dimensional that it is inaccessible to adequate measurement in this dimension.

Another problem is that because our primary experience is fixed within three-dimensional reality, so is our language. It is impossible to be semantically precise when describing hyperspace because language can only approach it metaphorically. For example, the word "heaven" is often used to describe a transcendent paradisiacal world because this realm is experienced as "higher" than ours. We use a three-dimensional concept (higher) to describe an inner state transcending three dimensions entirely. Semantically, the word "heaven" refers to the starry expanse above planet earth which extends into three-dimensional infinity. The metaphysical "heaven," on the other hand, represents but one portion of an interior multiverse encompassing all modes of consciousness, including the infernal dimensions. In popular usage, heaven is above and hell is below, but from the perspective of hyperspace they are both *within*.

It is significant to note that this metaphorical principle works in both directions; dreams, the language of the unconscious psyche (hyperspace), are usually metaphors for states of consciousness which are nonverbal, hence indescribable in ordinary language. Psychedelic and Shamanic states of consciousness are often equally indescribable. In other words, entities in hyperspace, whether they be our own dissociated psychological complexes, or true "aliens," are generally experienced (especially in dreams) as metaphors for higher-dimensional realities. Although they do not conform to our literal, three-dimensional expectations,this in no way implies that they are not real in their own space.

Any discussion of dimensions is incomplete without including time, since modern descriptions of our external reality refer to it as the "space-time continuum," or simply, space/time. Here is a concise explication of this idea:

The idea of a fourth dimension... was introduced to the modern world by Hermann Minkowski, who pointed out in 1908 that Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity is equivalent to an assertion that the world we live in is not three-dimensional but four-dimensional, the fourth dimension being time. Since "space" implies three-dimensionality, Minkowski referred not to "four-dimensional space" but to the "four-dimensional-space-time continuum..." It is only necessary to think of the three spatial dimensions -- length, breadth, and height -- as extensions in space. It is then an easy step to conceive the fourth dimension as extension in time. In other words, the fourth dimension of any object is its duration.[6]

To integrate this perspective with the Shamanic model of the cosmos, we must first recognize that time is inseparable from consciousness:

Time [is] bound up in consciousness. Man experiences time, can detect all time's endless changes and yet can he ever be sure it exists of its own right, out there, independent of him? Scientists as well as philosophers are concerned with such questions and indeed the objectivity of time and its separation from consciousness is perhaps one of the central issues in trying to understand time from a scientific viewpoint.[7]

It follows from this that, although time can be imagined as a dimension of "duration," it is always experienced subjectively as an eternal, "zero-dimensional" present:

Time is conceived as a line along which a point travels from the past toward the future. That point is the present moment. Being a point, it is necessarily infinitely short... Since the present is all that exists, the past having gone and the future not yet being here, such a concept of time is inadequate even for the description of inanimate reality. But it is the best of which we are capable.[8]

This paradox can be resolved by recognizing that time is an

observer-centered subjective experience of continuity in a three-dimensional present. Thus, time conceived of as "a dimension of duration" is dependent upon two functions of consciousness, memory and imagination. Although we can remember past events and can imagine future ones, we can only experience the past and the future as artifacts of our conscious present. It follows that time (the immediate present) is perpendicular to consciousness because memory (the past) and imagination (the future) are both components of :he psyche. Therefore, if time is a dimension, then so is consciousness because they are existentially inseparable.

Using the equation that each "higher" dimension is perpendicular to the one "below" it (these are three-dimensional concepts, but the principle transcends its description), we can say that consciousness and time are perpendicular to space,and are therefore multi-dimensional phenomena. This brings us back to the Shamanic model of the psyche, which we can now see as a more precisely differentiated description of human awareness than any provided by Western psychology.

In summary: Our familiar three-dimensional reality is called the "middle world" in the Shamanic model. Both the lower and upper worlds are internal dimensions which are entered via altered states of consciousness. Because hyperspace is perpendicular to ego-awareness, consciousness is the bridge which links all of the worlds together.

Access to these inner dimensions is dependent upon many factors. Everyone enters them while dreaming, but hypnosis, meditation, severe stress and many other catalysts, including psychedelic drugs, can also provide admittance. For the purposes of this book, we will concentrate on conscious Shamanic intent in conjunction with psychotropic plants as our method of entry into hyperspace. But first, having differentiated the territory, we must further examine its structure and contents.

Notes

1. McKenna, Terence (1991)."Sacred Plants and Mystic Realities," in The Archaic Revival, Harper, San Francisco, p. 250.

2. McLaughlin, S. C. (1979-80). "The relation between physical dimensions and higher consciousness," The Journal of Altered States of Consciousness., 5: 65-82.
3. Halifax, Joan (1990). "The shaman's initiation," Revision, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Autumn), p. 55.
4. "Chandogya Upanishad" (1957). The Upanishads, Mentor, NY, p. 74.
5. Rucker, R. (1984). The Fourth Dimension -- Toward a Geometry of Higher Reality, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, p. 8.
6. McLaughlin, op. cit.
7. Shallis, Michael (1982). On Time, Schocken, NY, p. 14.
8. Clynes, M. (1978). Sentics -- the Touch of the Emotions, Anchor-Doubleday, Garden City, NY, p. 21.

Chapter Three
THE EXPERIENCE OF MANY WORLDS

A common thread seems to connect all shamans across the planet.... That this commonalty cuts across seemingly irreconcilable ethnic and cultural lines attests to the mystery and power lying at the source of myth, the human psyche... From Lapland to Patagonia, from the Paleolithic to today, the archetypes activated during shamanic ordeals and exaltations are astonishingly similar.[1]

We know very little about the human psyche,which is to admit that we know very little about ourselves, let alone hyperspace. The inner dimensions remain largely terra incognita, despite a million descriptions of them by a cross-cultural spectrum of observers throughout history. In addition to constituting the Upper and Lower Worlds of shamanism, this realm is the Pleroma of the gnostics, the Astral Plane of occultism, the Bardo realm of Tibetan Buddhism, the Eternal Dreamtime of the Australian aborigines, the Unconscious Psyche of modern psychology and the Heavens and Hells of fundamentalist sects worldwide. The list could be extended almost indefinitely, and many volumes devoted to their comparison. For the purposes of this discussion it is sufficient to acknowledge that these are all descriptions of hyperspace, the inner dimensions accessed by consciousness.

As human beings incarnated in physical bodies on planet earth, we have evolved a belief systemcalled "consensus reality" which facilitate

agreement about our experience here. Out of this belief system we have agreed to create finer distinctions, such as "subjectivity" and "objectivity," which help to standardize (however crudely) our perceptions of the world. Because we are all physically locked into three-dimensional space, the general outlines of consensus reality appear self- evident; the attributes of earth, air, fire and water are pretty much agreed upon by most observers. Nevertheless, consensus reality resembles a political platform endorsed by majority vote; some of it is accepted without argument, some of it has been pushed through by lobbyists who've convinced us of their beliefs. Obviously there are huge areas of experience for which there is no general agreement. If true objectivity were possible, this could never happen.

We began by acknowledging the obvious, that subjective consciousness is a precondition for the perception of any spatial dimension. We observed that the scientific hypothesis of time as a "dimension of duration" is dependent upon memory and imagination, and that time cannot be separated from consciousness without violating subjective experience. The notion of "space-time" is a part of modern consensus reality, but I suggest that this is an attempt to objectify memory and imagination as dimensions of time when they are, in fact, functions of consciousness. Consequently, instead of "space-time," it seems more accurate to substitute "space-mind" as a concept linking physical space with the mind perceiving it.

Space-mind describes the experience of our subjective consciousness immersed in a three-dimensional world. But this is far from our only reality. The "zero-dimensional" point of consciousness, when focused inward, perceives another region, which I submit is best described by the term "mind-space," a distorted mirror-image of space-mind. Space-mind and mind-space are, back to back, the two infinities confronted by consciousness:

The unknown falls into two groups of objects: those which are outside and can be experienced by the senses, and those which are inside and are experienced immediately. The first group comprises the unknown in the outer world; the second the unknown in the inner world. We call this latter territory the unconscious.[2]

I am tuned to space-mind when I am primarily interacting with a three-dimensional reality. I'm tuned to mind-space when I am interacting with the inner worlds of the psyche.

Consensus reality reassures us that there are laws of nature determining the way physical space is presented to our awareness -- solid bodies tend to remain that way; gravity is a law of motion; properties of light affect the way in which we perceive objects in space; etc. To us, these laws are objectively self evident, which is to say that in our imaginations we conceive of them operating independently of subjective observation.

Because there is little consensus about the dimensions of mind-space, they tend to be dismissed as fantasy realms, as epiphenomena of the subjective imagination. This is the illusion of "objectivity" imposed upon the existential core of the psyche, the imaginary negation of our perceptual essence according to misconceived rules of evidence. Such a belief system guarantees the impossibility of ever exploring these dimensions in any systematic way.

Shamanic cultures are not so handicapped, and therefore have a more empirically useful grasp of mind-space than Western psychology. For thousands of years, healers have been routinely effecting cures by manipulating disease pathogens within multi-dimensional space. Western medicine says that this is impossible, even when confronted with evidence to the contrary.

Empirical portrayals of mind-space describe it as preeminently a realm of images, suggesting an alternative title of "the imaginal realm." The following is a capsule definition of this concept, stressing the idea that these images are real entities which are as "solid" in their own space as we are in ours:

In dealing with things of the imaginal realm, we are not talking about the stuff of fantasy or even of imagination, as these terms are generally understood today. Specifically, we are not concerned here with fictive matters or with what is "made up" through creative invention.... The imaginal realm is not only ontologically real; it is also a world that has form, dimension, and, most important for us, persons.... The imaginal

realm is a self-existent world... it is accessible through altered states of consciousness... it is populated by ontologically real personified beings; and... it interacts with the everyday material world, albeit often in ways that defy rational understanding.[3]

Because the phenomena of the imaginal realm can only be experienced by subjective consciousness, it is all but impossible to get any scientifically repeatable measurements of them. It ultimately reduces to perception trying to differentiate itself from the objects of perception within a subtle realm of perception which is perpendicular to a powerful, consensually validated "external" reality! Despite these difficulties, it is not difficult to obtain consensually validated descriptions of the inner dimensions. Even a perfunctory study of world mythology, folklore, comparative religion, depth psychology and mysticism will elicit the common themes and boundaries of the imaginal realms existing within mind-space. Jung's conception of the collective unconscious or "objective psyche" is probably as accurate a scientific portrayal as we have in the language of modern psychology:

The alchemist... knew definitely that as part of the whole he had an image of the whole in himself... This interior microcosm was the unwitting object of alchemical research. Today we would call it the collective unconscious, and we would describe it as "objective" because it is identical in all individuals and is therefore one. Out of this universal One there is produced in every individual a subjective consciousness, i.e., the ego.[4]

The shaman, in effect, is an ego who has learned how to reconnect with his source in mind-space Jung's collective unconscious). Another, less deliberate (yet empirically compatible), mode of entry into these dimensions has been widely documented within the last thirty years; findings in the field of Near Death Studies consistently Reinforce Shamanic descriptions of the imaginal realms. The conviction is inescapable that there is a good deal more to our total beingness than science (as currently defined) is able to explain.

Human imagination is the motive force of creativity, and conceptualization is the construction of images in mind-space. Belief (any complex of coherently imagined concepts) is a particularly powerful form of conceptualization because once created, it is self-perpetuating. The intensity of any belief determines the strength of its image (its beingness in mind-space), and in turn any effects it may have in the physical realm. A strongly held belief has a life of its own -- it can spread from mind to mind like a living virus and is fully capable of defending itself (through its hosts) when its survival is threatened.

It follows that because the imaginal realms are accessed via subjective consciousness, each observer will initially perceive a reality warped by the template of his most deep-seated convictions. Subjective awareness first encounters its unique subdivision of Consciousness-At-Large as a spatial dimension, complete with landscapes and entities. Many of the beings and artifacts met here are symbolic images of our own personal complexes, but both Shamanic tradition and the findings of modern depth psychology suggest that "other" (by definition extra-dimensional) entities also interact with us in the imaginal realms.

This recalls the age-old notion of a hidden kingdom inhabited by gods and demons. The gnostics called this transcendent multiverse the "Pleroma," a Greek word meaning "fullness" or "plenitude," and Jung recognized that the concept was an ancient, yet highly accurate description of the unconscious psyche:

For my private use I call the sphere of paradoxical existence, i.e., the instinctive unconscious, the Pleroma, a term borrowed from gnosticism.... Our difficulty is that we understand the psyche as what we make and regulate ourselves, and we can't get it into our heads that we are the helpless victims of psychic forces.[5]

To be "helpless victims of psychic forces" conjures up another gnostic concept, that of the "Archons" (Gk: rulers), who were perceived as primarily demonic organisms dwelling in the Pleroma, unconscious psyche, or mind-space:

The universe, the domain of the Archons, is like a vast prison whose innermost dungeon is the earth, the scene of man's life.... The Archons collectively rule over the world, and each individually in his sphere is a warder of the cosmic prison. Their tyrannical world-rule is called heimarmene, universal fate... [which] aims at the enslavement of man. As guardian of his sphere, each Archon bars the passage to the souls that seek to ascend after death, in order to prevent their escape from the world and their return to God.[6]

It is essential to know that these entities of the imaginal realm are usually cruel, unfeeling and dictatorial in their relationship with humans, much like the general tenor and content of the voices heard by schizophrenics. To give the reader an idea of what these voices are like, here's a sadly typical example from the psychiatric literature:

"God told me to even eat shit."
"He told you to eat shit?"
"Yes. I don't care. I ate shit."
"You ate shit this morning?"
"Sure. God told me to do this. I don't care."
"Your own shit?"
"Yes, just a small piece (laughs)."[7]

We really know very little about these despotic inner "rulers," although Tibetan Buddhism assures us that they are merely the personifications of our personal, cultural and religious beliefs:

These forty-two deities... will emerge from within your own heart and appear before you; they are the pure form of your projections, so recognize them.... Those realms... do not exist anywhere else, but lie in the four directions of your heart with the center as fifth, and now they emerge from within your heart and appear before you... [they] are the primordial spontaneous play of your mind.[8]

Note how this description of the imaginal realm coincides with our

definition of hyperspace as perpendicular to consciousness: "The four directions of your heart with the center as fifth." The deities (Archons) emerge from the center of the heart and are defined as "the pure form of your projections." The typically Eastern equation of these empirical phenomena with "illusion" may be true in some ultimate sense, but in the dimensions where they occur they are certainly "real" enough to the experiencer. As shamans we may be encountering and doing battle with objectified illusions, but we can't afford to forget that they can defeat us the same as if they were "real." We have to take our experience as it comes to us; the flipside of the hypothesis that "everything is an illusion" is that "everything exists."

Shamanic pragmatism asserts that, in their own space, the "Archons" are as alive as we are in ours. One could as well designate human personality as "a set of illusions about reality focused in a physical body." (Enlightenment is the absence of illusion described as a Clear Light, this is a state too transcendent to be normally associated with differentiated personalities, or bodies made of flesh and blood. It follows then that we are all embodied illusions, hardly more substantive than the images we meet with in our heads.) Far from being a mystical fantasy, this view of physical reality has become a commonplace of modern physics:

What we perceive to be physical reality is actually our cognitive construction of it. This cognitive construction may appear to be substantive, but the Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics leads directly to the conclusion that the physical world itself is not.[9]

If physical reality is merely a "cognitive construction" which we've all agreed upon, then the hyperspatial dimensions can hardly be dismissed as insubstantial illusions. Indeed, most meta- physical traditions insist that the higher the dimension, the closer one is to "reality."

All of this is simply a backwards way of asserting that the entities encountered in the imaginal realm are proportionately as real as we are, and some of them are a good deal "realer," at least in terms of their presence, their power, and their ability to intimidate any would-be visitor from three-dimensional space. On their own turf,

"hallucinations" such as these can be far more substantive than most of us are readily prepared to deal with.

It all ultimately boils down to a maddeningly complex distinction between "What is me and what is not-me?" Based on the evidence, our observations about the human psyche may be ordered within two major contexts:

1. Individual awareness is composed of a family" of interconnected psychological complexes organized around a central self. The physical body is a monad or vessel "containing" higher dimensional realms wherein these entities dwell. The three-dimensional ego-complex experiences an illusion of integration where it in fact does not exist. Here is evidence from the Monroe Institute, an organization founded for the study of psychic phenomena:

["Channeled" voice speaking through subject] We are trying to show that she is multi- dimensional, and this is why she is able to see as a great circle of self, of many forms, of the self. It appears to her to be like many selves extending from a circle and between. We are trying to show her there are many, many dimensions of one human self.[10]

2. This multi-dimensional entity (me) is in contact with other intelligences (not-me) within the inner realms who are apparently not immediately related to the basic "family unit." In addition to worldwide historical, religious and cultural data going back millennia, modern evidence for this conception can be found in almost any research done with human consciousness. Here's the Monroe Institute again:

Almost every time one of our Explorers went into the out-of-body state or simply into an advanced Focus 12, they encountered intelligent beings who were more or less willing to communicate -- and could do so.[11]

Since psychedelic drugs are a time-tested method for gaining access to the inner dimensions of consciousness, it comes as no surprise to discover that they routinely evoke similar contacts with these entities:

Psilocybin alkaloids... elicit the experience of contact with a personified Other.... Such experiences convince one of the reality of the personified Other as an organized entelechy made accessible through the neurochemical key of psilocybin.... Many individuals find themselves overwhelmed by the intimate presence of an Other within the previously inviolable realm of one's personal psyche... All of the old categories for explaining such a novel phenomenon will be invoked: some feel it a positive experience, like contacting a divine Mind, whereas others may use categories of demonic possession, or both. Another way of formulating this experience is that one is shifted to a witness position in regard to one's mental representational process which becomes organized around this theme of the Other.... To perceive that something else is thinking thoughts within oneself or is playing one's emotions as if they were a musical instrument is not a common perception.[12]

The evidence suggests that these phenomena may be a good deal more "common" than the quoted author realizes. The following account beautifully combines the four related themes of gnosticism, hallucinogens, shamanism and a Near Death experience into one event. Anthropologist Michael Harner here describes an adventure with ayahuasca, the potent psychedelic brew of Amazonian shamanism:

Now I was virtually certain I was about to die. As I tried to accept my fate, an even lower portion of my brain began to transmit more visions and information. I was "told" that this new material was being presented to me because I was dying and therefore "safe" to receive these revelations. These were the secrets reserved for the dying and the dead, I was informed. I could only very dimly perceive the givers of these thoughts: giant reptilian creatures reposing sluggishly at the lowermost depths of the back of my brain, where it met the top of the spinal column. I could only vaguely see them in what seemed to be gloomy, dark depths.

Then they projected a visual scene in front of me. First they showed me the planet Earth as it was eons ago, before there was any life on it. I saw an ocean, barren land, and a bright blue sky. Then black specks

dropped from the sky by the hundreds and landed in front of me on the barren landscape. I could see that the "specks" were actually large, shiny, black creatures with stubby pterodactyl-like wings and huge whale-like bodies. Their heads were not visible to me.
They flopped down, utterly exhausted from their trip, resting for eons. They explained to me in a kind of thought language that they were fleeing from something out in space. They had come to the planet earth to escape their enemy.

The creatures then showed me how they had created life on the planet in order to hide within the multitudinous forms and thus disguise their presence. Before me, the magnificence of plant and animal creation and speciation -- hundreds of millions of years of activity -- took place on a scale and with a vividness impossible to describe. I learned that the dragon-like creatures were thus inside of all forms of life, including man. They were the true masters of humanity and the entire planet, they told me. We humans were but the receptacles and servants of these creatures. For this reason they could speak to me from within myself....

I was afraid that somehow my soul might... through processes unknown but felt and dreaded, be acquired or reacquired by the dragon-like denizens of the depths. I suddenly felt my distinctive humanness, the contrast between my species and the ancient reptilian ancestors. I began to struggle against returning to the ancient ones, who were beginning to feel increasingly alien and possibly evil.[13]

This Shamanic description of an inner perceptual dimension inhabited by Archon-like entities is pure gnosticism -- humans are the "receptacles and servants" of archetypal forces which are personified in Harner's consciousness as dragons. Interestingly enough, these beings dwell in that section of his brain which meets "the top of the spinal column," a precise description of the so-called "Reptilian Complex," the most primitive part of the brain, which is associated with aggressive animal behavior. (Dragons are nothing if not bellicose reptiles.)
To define this material in Jungian terminology: The ego complex is in

contact with non personal "archetypes" (i.e., entities not part of the personal unconscious of the given individual) who "dwell" within the collective unconscious. In fact, in the light of modern research, Jung's original concept of archetypes is needlessly complex, and less useful than the more "primitive" notion of extra-dimensional entities, the gods and demons of classical mythology. Jung himself was apparently prepared to consider this hypothesis:

I once discussed the proof of identity for a long time with a friend of William James, Professor Hyslop in New York. He admitted that, all things considered, all these metaphysic phenomena could be explained better by the hypothesis of spirits than by the qualities and peculiarities of the unconscious. And here, on the basis of my own experience, I am bound to concede he is right. In each individual case I must of necessity be skeptical, but in the long run I have to admit that the spirit hypothesis yields better results in practice than any other.[14]

All of these data support the postulation of transcendent dimensions of being linked to space/time through consciousness itself. The un-conscious is actually a dimension of dimensions. The rather narrow band of forces we call space/time then becomes only one portion of an apparently infinite multiverse of superficially invisible realms of experience.

The Pleroma ("Fullness") of the gnostics can now be appreciated as a highly accurate description of a basic reality; the multiverse, hyperspace, imaginal realm, mind-space, or unconscious psyche is nothing if not "full," as has been attested by the bewildering diversity of both modern and ancient descriptions of it. There are many, many worlds within the psyche, and it seems that each one (or each one we can access and remember at least) is three-dimensional within its own space.

NOTES

1. Halifax, Joan (1990). Shaman: The Wounded Healer, Thames and Hudson, NY, p. 5, passim.

2. Jung, C.G. (1959). Aion, Bollingen Series XX, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, p. 3.
3. Ring, Kenneth (1989). "Toward an imaginal interpretation of 'UFO Abductions'," Revision, Vol. 11, No. 4, p. 18, passim.
4. Jung, op. cit., p. 164.
5. Jung, C.G. (1975). Letters, Vol. 1, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, p. 61.
6. Jonas, Hans (1963). The Gnostic Religion, Beacon Press, Boston, pp. 42-43.
7. Modell, A.H. (1958). "The theoretical implication of hallucinatory experiences in schizophrenia" in Journal of the American Psy- choanalytic Association. 6:442-480.
8. Freemantle, F., and Trungpa, C. (1975). The Tibetan Book of the Dead, Shambhala, Boston, p.51.
9. Zukav, Gary (1979). The Dancing Wu Li Masters, Wm. Morrow, NY, p. 105.
10. Monroe, R.A. (1987). Far Journeys, Doubleday,NY, p. 66.
11. Ibid.,p. 39.
12. Billings, Robin (1989). The Way of the Little Clowns, Unpublished monograph, pp. 13-15.
13. Harner, Michael (1980). The Way of the Shaman,Harper & Row, San Francisco, pp. 4-5.
14. Jung, Letters, Vol. 1, p. 431.

Chapter Four
LIVING IN THE WORLD

Man must reach a new relationship to the world around him.... To do this he must give priority, not to external problems, but to the mind that is considering them.... Hardly a beginning has yet been made to bring the illimitable inner world that has recently been opened to us, the world of the unconscious, the world of the dreaming mind, into living contact with everyday life.... Our problems are plainly growing beyond conventional human control, and consciousness has no choice but to enlarge itself to meet them. The trouble is, consciousness per se has not the power to do this. It must look beyond itself for help.[1]

In accordance with the principles of dimensional progression, we have seen that higher dimensional observers can discern the lower dimensions more "objectively" than the other way around. Any world is subjective until we can perceive it from the next higher level. This principle enables the shaman to cure an illness from the "other side," to manipulate its symbolic likeness in the imaginal realm. Because he has learned how to project his awareness into higher-dimensional regions, the shaman is empowered to act on three-dimensional space in ways we have traditionally labeled as "magical," as the work of a supernatural being. "Supernatural," of course, is just a word which defines the limits of our current understanding.

It follows that upon consciously entering the realms of mind-space, a

well-integrated personality will encounter a different dimension (or at least perceive it differently) than a less integrated one.

One of the most common ordeals of Shamanic initiation is the symbolic dismemberment and reintegration of the apprentice. This universal Psychedelic Shamanism theme is emblematic of a deep psychological unification, and is a mandatory precondition for the skillful navigation of the imaginal realms.

Since it obviously takes more competency to climb the dimensional ladder than to descend it, it's easy to see why neophytes using psychedelic drugs can easily get in over their heads. A poorly integrated personality is no better equipped to manipulate the forces of mind-space than it is those of this world. Serious inner work, however one defines the concept, is therefore an essential prerequisite for anyone seeking access to the higher dimensions.

Although the fully initiated shaman has access to powers which are incomprehensible to most people, it is bought at a price that few are willing to pay. In traditional cultures the Shamanic calling is never lightly undertaken, indeed, it is frequently resisted by those whom the spirits have chosen as their channels. Nobody who knows the score (and everyone born into a Shamanic culture understands what is involved) actively seeks the ordeals of initiation, and usually only does so when it can no longer be avoided. Occasionally this amounts to a life or death dilemma -- the spirits are not above using death threats to intimidate the candidate if he or she does not comply with their wishes.

The call from the spirit world is frequently highly unwelcome: the calling of a shaman, though a spiritually privileged person, is arduous, dedicated and often lonely; and the initiation ordeal, whether inflicted by the spirits or the tribe, is invariably painful in the extreme: it effects a sort of supernatural selection. Madness and even death may be the result if the shaman cannot endure his initiatory tribulations; but madness followed by death may also be the result of the refusal of a Shamanic vocation...[2]

Initiation is a universal prerequisite for the Shamanic calling. Whether willingly undertaken, or involuntarily experienced as a psycho-spiritual

crisis, one's competence to manage the forces of the imaginal realm must first be forged and then tempered in the fires of this initiatory ordeal. Uninitiated, unprepared individuals using psychedelics to access the dimensions of mind-space run the risk of being overwhelmed by their own unintegrated complexes in the guise of what the Tibetans so aptly call the "Peaceful and Wrathful deities."

The fully realized shaman, on the other hand, is as comfortable operating in the transcendent realms as he is in this one. The acquisition of such abilities was the goal of the medieval alchemists (a brotherhood of Western shamans now effectively extinct), who recognized that all of the dimensions are linked by consciousness. The Latin title they gave to this expanded perspective was the *unusmundus*, the "one world."

This insight that we live an occluded and partial existence within a larger unity is found in so many different traditions that it can be regarded as the fundamental postulate of the Shamanic world-view. A misleadingly simple idea, it forms the basis of all inner work and provides a clear explanation for how mind and matter interact.

The shaman's worlds and levels are more than interconnected. They are holocoenotic; that is, every part affects every other part. Shamans believe that these interactions can be perceived and affected by one who knows how to do so and that the shaman, like a spider at the center of a cosmic web, can feel and influence distant realms. The shaman was thus a forerunner of later Chinese sages who claimed that "Heaven, Earth and the ten thousand things form one body."[3]

These two concepts, the One World, and the shaman's Initiation into its mysteries, are emblematic of a cosmic transaction -- that of the Subjective becoming aware of itself within the Objective for the purpose of ultimate unification. In the concept of psychedelic shamanism lies the possibility of a deceptively easy access to the inner realms for the purposes of growth and integration. As always, the rewards of such undertakings are proportional to their dangers.

The "consummation of the Great Work" (learning to live in the "one world" of the alchemists) is an archaic Western equivalent of Shamanic

initiation. An extreme rarity in any time or culture, the attainment of such knowledge represents a personal breakthrough of the highest order. Yet, assuming an eternal continuity of consciousness in the dimensions of mind-space, the concept is unavoidably obvious:

Existence is to be regarded as an unbroken flux of life, subject to incessant transition and change. Life in a fleshly form on Earth, life in the subtle after-death body in Heaven-worlds, in Hells, or in the Intermediate State, and the life which seems to take birth through the womb-doors is in reality one.[4]

Most of us have a biased misconception of "the two worlds" of space-mind and mind-space.

Western homage to the first world and repudiation of the second is an example of how a living belief-system (in this case scientific materialism) preserves itself by denying the psyche any function beyond a few narrowly defined limits. This single belief-complex has arguably caused our worst problems, and in its extreme manifestations no longer has survival value for either ourselves or our environment.

The concept of "the one world," on the other hand, is holistic and integrative and describes a unification endorsed by both religious doctrine and psychological theory. The Shamanic state of consciousness represents an evolutionary advance of cosmic proportions, since those rare individuals who have attained it have transcended the human condition as it is usually experienced and understood.

Unfortunately, Shamanic initiation, the invariably traumatic penetration into an enlarged experience of reality, is defined by Western culture as either deviant or pathological. Whereas tribal cultures accept the shaman as an indispensable, if eccentric, member of the community, we dismiss those who manifest such traits as mentally disturbed. Once identified and labeled, our would be shamans are usually exiled to mental hospitals, prisons, or the streets. Shamans seem to be outsiders in any culture, but in ours they are outcasts as well.

Usually the shaman is an intellectual and is alienated from society....Shamanism is not, in these traditional societies, a terribly

pleasant office. Shamans are not normally allowed to have any political power, because they are sacred...Shamans are peripheral to society's goings on in ordinary social life in every sense of the word[5].

Shamanism is universal, a uniquely personal, yet worldwide phenomenon channeling the deepest archetypes of the human psyche. Because it reveals consciousness in context with its source, shamanism is our oldest model for the exploration of the inner dimensions. It is also humanity's most ancient form of religion, as well as the precursor of both psychology and medicine.

Shamanism can be defined as a family of traditions whose practitioners focus on voluntarily entering altered states of consciouness in which they experience themselves, or their spirit(s), traveling to other realms at will and interacting with other entities in order to serve their community.[6]

The key ideas here are that the shaman can alter his consciousness at will (either through innate skill or by using Psychotropic drugs); that he is a master of the out-of-body experience (that is, he can go where he wills in other dimensions of reality, and understands how to deal with the forces he meets there); and, last but not least, he serves the needs of his community.

[The shaman] is one who has attained communication with the supernatural (a spirit world, in most shamanistic conceptions) and may act as a mediator between spirits or gods and man, making the desires of each known to the other. In this, he may be called a primitive prophet. Apparently his ecstasy is not for himself but for others: his patients, his disciples, or the community at large. Yet we must not forget that in his becoming a mouthpiece of the gods he fulfills his calling -- and some reports indicate that a shaman that has no occasion to shamanize tends to become ill.[7]

It is because of his service to others that holistic cultures welcome the shaman in their midst; he serves an indispensable function, and

although he may still be an outsider and psychologically isolated from his fellows, it is from this very difference that he derives his powers. Although his talents are often feared, they are also respected and solicited, for the shaman has traditionally been the healer of the ills of his tribe.

Nonholistic cultures, such as our own, do not acknowledge the reality of the shaman's talents, hence shut themselves off from the services he is able to provide. A society which makes no room for the natural healers in its midst, exiling its indigenous holy men and women to institutions or slums out of fear or condescension, is that society which is most in need of their talents.

It is difficult to think of this latter except in terms of our current ecological crisis, a planetary disease caused by human refusal to acknowledge whole systems. This is the exact antithesis of the Shamanic world view, and one explanation for why those manifesting that viewpoint are treated as untouchables in our culture. If it is indeed possible to alter reality from the inner planes as shamanism suggests, then it is time that those of us with that temperament learned how. Ironically, it is the outcasts among us who may embody the secret of our salvation.

The problem is that we have so abandoned our native Western Shamanic wisdom that there is no one left to teach us the craft. To be sure, there are individuals working within alchemy, magick, witchcraft, kabbalah, etc., all ancient systems which ceased to evolve in any culturally meaningful way centuries ago. Although this forgotten heritage contains much valuable symbolic information, it generally hasn't kept pace with contemporary life. In true holistic fashion, the archetypes of the collective unconscious evolve in company with our conscious minds; we Jive in the unus munduswhether we recognize it or not. Archaic rituals and Latin spells from 17th Century grimoires may have romantic appeal and even a certain amount of power, but they seldom reflect our everyday reality. The rituals of any living Shamanic tradition, on the other hand, are always immediately relevant to everyone within that culture.

Because of this loss of our own inner traditions, a fascination with classical shamanism has surfaced and spread rapidly throughout

Western society during the last decade or two. A topic which was an anthropological specialty only twenty years ago, is now familiar to a large portion of the general population. Because the industrialized world is bereft of models for ecological living, the motivation behind this sudden interest is probably an instinctive nostalgia for the integrated lifestyle which tribalism seems to offer. Unfortunately, the trend implies romantic escapism more than a viable way to redefine our relationship to the planet. For better or worse, the Western psyche has moved too far from the earthy realities of the tribal matrix to pretend that we could ever live in precisely that relationship with the earth spirits again. New answers won't be found in playing Indian with the fur and feathers of endangered species, but in an acceptance and redefinition of our affiliation with those Post Modern forces now shaping the planet.

Although there is an accelerating trend toward cultural syncretism in the modern world, the Western mind is still quite different from the Eastern, let alone the Tribal, and the symbols emerging from the collective psyche of any given group, while they may be universal in a Jungian sense, still tend to be culturally specific. Which is to say, that if we are to realistically incorporate the tools of psychedelic shamanism into our lives, we must acknowledge our unique Western traditions rather than yearn toward romanticized symbols and cosmologies we've only encountered in some Freshman anthropology textbook.

It is debatable whether a Westerner who uses Shamanic practices divorced from the social, cultural, and mythological setting in which they were originally embedded can usefully be called a shaman.[8]

It shouldn't be surprising that practical guidance in these matters can be found in Amazonia, one of the last outposts of the Shamanic world view. These contemporary healers are not at all reticent to integrate both ancient and modern elements into their practices. Here, where dying tribal cultures and their rapidly degrading environments are a microcosm of the world predicament, Shamanic pragmatism includes

any useful resource that might stave off death:

Shamans are constantly appropriating symbolically whatever innovations they see or hear about, using them in their visions as vivid metaphors to further explore the spirit realms, to increase their knowledge, or to defend themselves from supernatural attack. Shipibo shamans receive books in which they can read the condition of patients, have spirit pharmacies, or travel on airplanes covered with meaningful geometric designs to the bottom of lakes to recover the [soul] of their patients.... Canelos Quichua receive from the spirits X-ray machines, blood pressure apparatuses, stethoscopes, and large bright surgical lights.... An acculturated Campa shaman uses in his healing songs radio frequencies to communicate with water spirits.... A vegetalista living in Iquitos [said] that besides angels with swords and soldiers with guns, he has a jet fighter which he uses when he is attacked by strong sorcerers.... An ayahuasquero of Pucallpa [said] that in his visions he was given magical keys, so that he was able to drive beautiful cars and airplanes of many kinds.[9]

As previously stated, traditional shamanism recognizes a three world hierarchy: the Lower world, which represents the realm of the animal powers; the Middle world, which encompasses our everyday experience on planet earth; and the Upper world, which is seen as the domain of higher spirits. The modern Shamanic challenge is to integrate the Upper and Lower worlds within our Middle world bodies; a living balance must be struck between the wounded forces of matter, and the pull toward an enlarged experience of mind-space. One cannot function in any dimension fully without such a synthesis. This is what is meant by living in the One World; it is synonymous with Shamanic initiation.

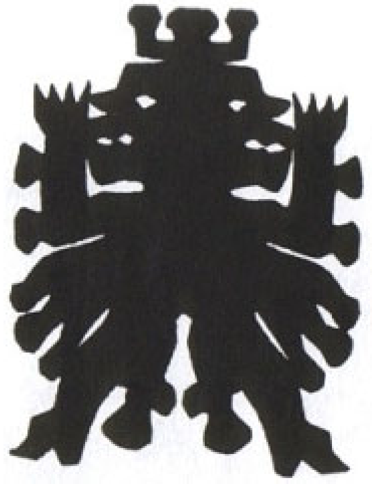
Living in the One World means being fully conscious in that outer/inner world which presents itself to our immediate experience, the flowing, dynamic world of the present moment where time is recognized as inseparable from the awareness of Now. Time-past is always a memory within the present and essential for that sense of continuity which informs our choices; but it is an immediate time-past, not an imaginary past-time divorced from present experience.

Any imagination of the past which excludes the present is an illusion because it drains energy from our only point of power: choice in the Now. The authentic shaman never forgets this -- his effectiveness is measured by his pragmatic compre- hension and acceptance of the One World. In contrast, the romantic traditionalist is almost always a dilettante.

Since our culture no longer provides instruction on how to navigate the Shamanic dimensions we must learn the hard way, from our own experience. Although Psychotropic plants provide easy access to mind-space, it is axiomatic that without some sort of preparation or guidance we enter these realms at a considerable disadvantage. One of the most important lessons we need to learn is that not all of the entities of hyperspace are reliable teachers or allies. This makes our task considerably more difficult.

NOTES

1. McGlashan, A. (1967). The Savage and Beautiful Country, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, p. 54.
2. Kohsen, A. (1966). Book review of Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy (M. Eliade), in Psychedelic Review, No. 7, p. 120.
3. Walsh, R. (1990-a). "Shamanic cosmology: a psychological examination of the shaman's worldview," in Revision, Vol. 13, No. 2, (Fall), p. 89.
4. Evans-Wentz, W.Y. (1969). Tibet's Great Yogi Milarapa, Oxford University Press, NY, p. 286 (footnote).
5. McKenna, T. (1991). "Tryptamine hallucinogens and Consciousness," The Archaic Revival, Harper, San Francisco, pp. 45-46.
6. Walsh (1990-a), op. cit.
7. Naranjo, C. and Ornstein, R. (1971). On the Psychology of Meditation, Viking, NY, p. 97.
8. Walsh, R. (1990-b), The Spirit qf Shamanism, Tarcher, L.A.
9 Luna, Luis Eduardo and Amaringo, Pablo. (1991) Ayahuasca Visions: The Religious Iconography of a Peruvian Shaman, North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, pp. 34-35.



Chapter Five
THE ENTITIES OF THE IMAGINAL REALM
PART 1

If the history of psychic research tells us anything at all, it is that we are surrounded on all sides by nonhuman intelligences who habitually lie to us for no discernible reason other than to amuse themselves. These entities are at least as old as human consciousness (hence the near-universality of the Trickster motif in legend and folklore) and seem curiously dependent on us for their continued existence.... John Keel, writing in 1983, speculated on the possibility that "We are the intelligence which controls the phenomena." The corollary is obvious: Only when we have arrived at a fuller and more balanced understanding of ourselves will we begin to understand the latent forces that seek to manipulate us.[1]

To understand the entity phenomenon it is useful to lay aside the concept of monotheism in general and of universally benevolent, well-intentioned deities in particular. Popular Christianity has generally conditioned Westerners to the idea of a single, all-loving Father-God. Based on empirical facts, it may be more productive to re-examine the ancient notion of a pantheon of "gods" coming in as many kinds and dispositions as we do. Indeed, in conformance with our hypothesis of dimensional progression (i.e., that higher dimensional entities can

perceive lower dimensions more easily than lower dimensional entities can perceive higher dimensions), it logically follows that they appear inextricably linked with our own awareness.

Senses more refined than ours would show us worlds of atoms, of light, of energy, where now we think we see tables, buildings, individuals. Subtle beings, whose substance escapes our perception, can exist around us, penetrate us, play with us, act on our thoughts and our senses, without our having the least awareness of it.[2]

That human beings hear the paranormal voices of "others" under certain circumstances has been well established for millennia. Schizophrenia and mystical rapture are probably the most common catalysts, but the ingestion of psychedelic substances consistently produces comparable phenomena. Psychedelic shamanism has traditionally attributed these inner voices to "teachers" residing within the substances themselves. The obvious question is: do hallucinogenic plants actually embody "entities," or do they elicit aspects of the unconscious psyche which present themselves in this guise? Most importantly, can we believe what they tell us? Terence McKenna has said: "It is no great accomplishment to hear a voice in the head. The accomplishment is to make sure that it is telling you the truth."[3]

These questions may be unanswerable, but they are fascinating subjects to explore. One recent development within the Shamanic tradition is that often the plant allies no longer communicate with their indigenous hosts the way they did previously; that is, a change seems to have taken place in the relationship between some tribal cultures and their psychedelic "allies." Here is the now-famous Mazatecan shaman, Maria Sabina, observing a change in her relationship with the teachers residing in the psilocybin mushroom:

Before Wasson, I felt the saint children [entities in the mushroom] elevated me. I don't feel that anymore. The force has diminished. If

[the foreigners hadn't come] the saint children would have kept their power.... From the moment the foreigners arrived, the saint children lost their purity. They lost their force; the foreigners spoiled them. From now on they won't be any good. There's no remedy for it.[4]

For the moment, let us take this at face value and interpret it as a shift in the interface between the plant allies and their aboriginal users, perhaps a mutation in consciousness analogous to what may have occurred when the Delphic Oracle stopped speaking to the Greeks. If we can hypothesize sentient plants, then it's not much of a step to theorize that their recent encounter with modern left-brain human consciousness may have altered their perceptions as much as our own. One must acknowledge that there is a great difference in the psychological reality of a traditional Mazatecan Indian from rural Mexico, and a modern Westerner. Intercourse between humans and mushrooms was confined for millennia to hunter-gatherer and subsistence agricultural tribal cultures -- people whose awareness was of necessity focused on a quite different reality than our own. Conceivably, because there was no survival value in the differentiating left brain function evolving the way that it has in the modern West, these people have arguably developed a form of awareness more appropriate to their specific surroundings. Since the mid-fifties, however, the Mazatecs1 mushroom allies have been exposed to a different kind of consciousness, and have possibly evolved accordingly:

The author's interview in 1969 with old Apolonio Teran, who was considered in the community to be a powerful Wise Man, documented a series of ideas that parallel what Maria Sabina has told us: "...What is terrible, listen, is that the divine mushroom no longer belongs to us. Its sacred language has been profaned. The language has been spoiled and it is indecipherable for us..."
"What is this new language like?" "Now the mushrooms speak English! Yes, it's the tongue that the foreigners speak..."
"What is this change of Language due to?"
"The mushrooms have a divine spirit; they always had it for us, but the foreigner arrived and frightened it away..."

"Where was this divine spirit frightened to?"
"It wanders without direction in the atmosphere, it goes along in the clouds. And not only was the divine spirit profaned, but that of ourselves [the Mazatecs] as well."[5]

It is significant to note that the old shaman identifies his tribe with the spirit of the ally, both are "wandering without direction," a highly accurate image of what happens to indigenous cultures when they are exposed to Western "civilization." This may be simple projection, however, and say more about the situation of his tribe than that of the mushroom spirit. The former ally now "speaks English," which is to say that it expresses itself not in terms of plants, animals, etc. (the everyday artifacts of subsistence agriculture and hunter-gatherer cultures) but in quasi-scientific terms which appeal to contemporary Western minds. Here's a message from the mushroom received by Terence McKenna, writing under the pseudonym O. T. Oss:

"I am old, older than thought in your species, which is itself fifty times older than your history. Though I have been on earth for ages I am from the stars. My home is no one planet, for many worlds scattered through the shining disc of the galaxy have conditions which allow my spores an opportunity for life... Since it is not easy for you to recognize other varieties of intelligence around you, your most advanced theories of politics and society have advanced only as far as the notion of collectivism. But beyond the cohesion of the members of a species into a single social organism there lie richer and even more baroque evolutionary possibilities. Symbiosis is one of these.

Symbiosis is a relation of mutual dependence and positive benefits for both of the species involved. Symbiotic relationships between myself and civilized forms of higher animals have been established many times and in many places throughout the long ages of my development. These relationships have been mutually useful; within my memory is the knowledge of hyperlight drive ships and how to build them. I will trade this knowledge for a free ticket to new worlds around suns younger and more stable than your own. To secure an eternal existence down the long river of cosmic time I again and again offer this agreement to higher

beings and thereby have spread throughout the galaxy over the long millennia. A mycelial network has no organs to move the world, no hands; but higher animals with manipulative abilities can become partners with the star knowledge within me and if they act in good faith, return both themselves and their humble [sic] mushroom teacher to the million worlds to which all citizens of our stars warm are heir."[6]

This kind of language is a far cry from one of Maria Sabina's chants, translated from the Mazatec into Spanish, and from thence into English. In a session recorded in 1956, the mushroom appeared to her in this guise:

Father Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus
You Mother, Mother, my Mother who art in
the house of heaven
You Mother who art in the house of heaven
In your beautiful world, says
In your fresh world, says
In your world of clarity, says
I am going there, says
I am arriving there, says...
Because I am speaking poorly and humbly
says
I speak to you, you are the only one, you my
Mother, to whom I can speak with humility,
you my Mother who art in the house of heaven,
says
My Father who art in the house of heaven,
says
I am going there, says ... [etc.][7]

Observe that although the language is very different, the content of the experience seems to be identical: a promise that the mushroom spirit will transport its host to a transcendent world. The significant difference is that despite its rather inflated rhetoric, the Western

message is an offer of a kind of *partnership*:

Animals with manipulative abilities can become partners with the star knowledge within me and if they act in good faith, return both themselves and their humble [sic] mushroom teacher to the million worlds to which all citizens of our starswarm are heir. (Emphasis mine)

For modern Westerners however, even a junior partnership is a better deal than childlike subservience; notice how Maria Sabina's message is couched in parental terms:

Father Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus
You Mother, Mother, my Mother who art in
the house of heaven
You Mother who art in the house of heaven
[etc.]

Apparently in the Mazatec view the only way one can transcend the material plane (get to "the house of heaven") is not via one's own mature accomplishments, but through the intercession of cosmic parent figures. The point here is not to assume a superior stance by observing how the Mazatec world view is different from ours, but to show how the mushroom uses the belief systems of its hosts to push its agendas, and in this instance has cruelly abandoned its old Mazatecan "allies." That's not very godlike behavior, nor is it the way any responsible parent would treat his children. These qualities, alas, are utterly typical of the voices heard by schizophrenics. It is almost a defining characteristic of these inner voices that they are arrogant, patriarchal, pompous, and often cruel. Here is a first-person description of an inner voice taken from the literature of schizophrenia:

The voice uttered only a sentence or two on each occasion that it appeared. The voice claimed to originate from God.... The verbal production of the thoughts-out-loud [i.e. inner

voice] usually takes the form of monologues attempting to persuade the ego to adopt a belief in the authority of the agent behind the thoughts-out-loud, and to accept a messianic fixation.... It is impossible not to be influenced by the experiencing of such phenomena. Regardless of their social evidential value, *they represent to the person who experiences them, proof of contact with some agent possessing sources of information broader than those of any factor of the human organism.* [Emphasis mine: the author is referring to paranormal true predictions of future events by the voice on four separate occasions.]

There has been an intricate interrelationship between the hallucinatory pains and the thoughts-out-loud. The hallucinatory pains first appeared at a time when the ego was developing a doubt of the claim of divine authority made by the thoughts-out-loud, and their occurrence was explained by the thoughts-out-loud as a penalty for the doubt. On several occasions since, pains have occurred following threat by the thoughts-out-loud that they would take place if commands made by it were not obeyed.[8]

These voices heard by schizophrenics are often indistinguishable in tone and content from those evoked by psychedelic plants. Note the self-ag-grandizement in this message from a "mushroom entity" speaking to another Westerner in 1982.

My magical and mystic powers have been known by your kind since before Christ.
Societies that have obeyed my rule have lived with nature and realized themselves. I give laughter, and I can also bring about the mightiest wars before your eyes. Showing the future to those who understand and can record, is nothing. I can place you with the Gods. Once

you have stepped aboard hiper [sic] light drive transition, you are never again the same person.
As you learn to reproduce my growing environment, you will come to love me. Later, as you learn thy way, you will look upon me with awe and amazement. I am respected with the highest regards. For I am the flesh of the Gods.[9]

Whatever may be the source of this communication, it differs considerably from the sophisticated rhetoric received by McKenna. This suggests the possibility that at least some portion of the inner voices may be more artifacts of each individual's unconscious psyche than a bonafide communication between plants and people. If the entities generally use the vocabularies and syntax of their hosts, the truly important question is: how many of the host's personal belief complexes also bleed through as the "Word of God?"
Far from being an artifact of mental aberration, the paternalistic rhetoric of the "gods" is utterly typical of mystical religious writings worldwide. Here's one from the gnostic gospels (circa 350 C.E.):

I was sent forth from the power,and I have come to those who reflect upon me,
and I have been found among those who seek after me.
Look upon me, you who reflect upon me, and you hearers, hear me.
You who are waiting for me, take me to yourselves.
And do not banish me from your sight.
And do not make your voice hate me, nor your hearing.
Do not be ignorant of me anywhere or any time. Be on your guard!
Do not be ignorant of me.
For I am the first and the last...
[Etc.][10]

The effect of these communications is usually an implicit threat -- "You'd better accept my authority, or you'll regret it!" If this strategy doesn't work, let's not forget that the flip side of intimidation is condescension; compare the above quote with a channeled message of

the patronizing type:

Listen!... Put me first in everything, then shall all be added unto you...
Listen!... Be at peace.
Striving gets you nowhere. It simply leaves you exhausted and frustrated because you never seem to be nearer the goal. Just learn to be.
When you have ceased striving, crawl into my loving arms like a weary child.
Encircled in those arms, feel the peace, comfort, and complete oneness with me.
Feel yourself melt into me... Listen! Walk my way and do my will.
Let me show you my wonders and glories.
If you seek happiness in the wrong way, it cannot be found. Seek me first and find me.
That is the simple answer. Put first things first, no matter what the cost or sacrifice.
Love me with all your heart, with all your soul, and all your mind.[11]

While not overtly threatening, the essence of this message is insultingly parental. (That prose like this is typical of much modern channeled writing is an insight that maybe the real task of the New Age is for human awareness to grow up and accept adulthood.) Certainly, the basic exhortation here is to accept a passive and obedient child's role in relationship to the inner voice. This is arrested development; the healthy outcome of any growth process is maturation, and entities demanding childish subservience seem to be hindering our natural processes to further hidden agendas of their own.

Another hint that we may be dealing more with a function of human awareness than with true "plant teachers" is that one can receive identical messages from synthetic chemical compounds made in a laboratory! Here it's the DET "spirit":

Quoted in Peter Stafford's Psychedelics Encyclopedia (1982), [Temple of the True Inner Light founder Alan] Birnbaum states,
"DET (Di-Ethyl Tryptamine) is the first psychedelic which convinced me

that the psychedelic is a Primeval Light Being which is God, the Creator.
We smoked it in a large hookah and it was so clear and bright -- unmistakable -- it was a Being."
...The Temple of the True Inner Light relies on "the word" coming from direct -- vocal or heard -- communication with spirit forms manifested from [DET] ingestion.[12]

I offer this material to illustrate the idea that if you accept the hypothesis of plant teachers then you have to accept the hypothesis of synthetic chemical teachers as well. This, it seems to me, opens up a can of worms. Wouldn't it be more elegant to hypothesize entities emerging from our own unconscious when stimulated by certain chemical molecules? Why deify the catalyst?

The consistently overblown language broadcast through these channels suggests the existence of incorporeal forces infesting human awareness which are primarily concerned with impressing us with their importance. This is hardly "godlike" behavior -- rather the opposite, in fact. What truly supreme being is so insecure as to need let alone demand human worship and subservience? Or, more to the point, what mature adult needs deities like that in his or her life?

Reality presents itself in hierarchies, or at least human consciousness seems structured to perceive it that way. Hierarchies can be thought of as a kind of sedimentation of value. Jung's four psychological functions -- Intuition, Thought, Feeling and Sensation (fire, air, water and earth) -- naturally arrange themselves in a hierarchy of abstraction which reflects their relative "densities." That is to say, sensation (earth) is "denser" than emotion (water), just as water is denser than air, and thought (air) "denser" than intuition (fire). The ancient earth,water, air, fire metaphor symbolizes a profound psychic hierarchy which Jung clearly recognized as an archetypal description of human consciousness.

The Kabbalah goes even further and describes each of Jung's functions as an actual dimension; specifically, Assiah (earth), Yetzirah (water), Briah (air) and Atziluth (fire). Indeed, each realm is conceived to be spatially at least as infinite as the physical multiverse. It follows that if Jung's psychological functions correspond to four "spatial" dimensions

within the collective unconscious, then the human body can be defined as a vessel containing the hierarchy. All of this, of course, fully supports the Shamanic world view as previously outlined.

Empirical evidence shows that each dimension within the imaginal realm is inhabited by monads of sentient energy. Like all living organisms, these entities seek to preserve, nourish and promote themselves. The closer the perception of the entity matches our own, the more appealing will be its arguments to our awareness, and the more likely we will feed it with our belief. The dynamics of this exchange are explicitly described in the Upanishads:

Now if a man worships another deity,thinking the deity is one and he another, he does not know.
He is like a beast for the Devas.
For verily, as many beasts nourish a man, thus does every man nourish the Devas.
If only one beast is taken away, it is not pleasant; howmuch more when many are taken!
Therefore it is not pleasant to the Devas that men should know this.[13]

In Hinduism and Theosophy, the Devas are disembodied spirits which are identical to angelic beings, gnostic Archons and the like. The clue that they are dependent upon our own thought processes and belief systems is found in the first sentence: "Now if a man worships another deity,thinking the deity is one and he another, he does not know." This is a quintessentially gnostic statement; not to "know" is to be a slave to the Deva-Archons, to be a slave to our own beliefs. To be a "beast for the Devas" is to feed them, nourish them, keep them alive. Since such beliefs are sentient creatures, out for their own welfare, "it is not pleasant to the Devas that men should know this.."

The gnostic Archons, then, are intelligences existing in the imaginal realm in "bodies" consisting of thought and feeling. They are able to tune into our awareness through our affinity with their wavelength, that is, our beliefs. They feed off of our allocation of energy to their dimension, and compete with other Archons on other levels in the overall hierarchy for their nourishment. Like any differentiated

organism, they will instinctively seek to maintain their identities and to resist any attempts at integration into a larger whole. In the simplest terms, all organisms strive to preserve themselves and to avoid death -- to eat to live and to avoid being eaten -- just like we do. Again, we can look to the insights of the psychedelic experience for support of this notion:

G.I. Gurdjieff (1950) formulated [the] interesting idea... that everything in the universe "reciprocally maintains" every other thing in the universe. In other words,
everything eats and is eaten; physically, psychologically, and spiritually. Just as one must eat to maintain oneself at a point far from equilibrium, e.g., as a dynamic, ongoing life process, so are there structures which eat oneself for the same purpose. The central question... is what is one feeding with one's behavior, thoughts, emotions, or: What's eating you?... The notion of everything eating and being eaten is a useful metaphor in attempting to understand the relation of ourselves to higher level structures, including values.
We are what we feed, as well as what we eat. The relationship which one establishes with the [psilocybin] mushroom epitomizes this particular quality of the universe: when one eats the physical body of the mushroom a strange symbiosis is initiated. Soon after one ingests the carpophores, the mind of the mushroom begins to ingest your mind. [14]

The out-of-body experiences of Robert Monroe provide further insights into this concept. Here he describes some encounters with typically Archon- like entities, which he refers to as "intelligence forces":

The same impersonal probing, the same power, from the same angle. However, this time I received the firm impression that I was inextricably bound by loyalty to this intelligence force, always had seen, and that I had a job to perform here on earth. The job was not necessarily to my liking, but I was assigned to it.
The impression was that I was manning a 'pumping station', that it was a dirty, ordinary job but it was mine and I was stuck with it, and

nothing, absolutely nothing could alter the situation... I got the impression of huge pipes, so ancient they were covered with undergrowth and rust. Something like oil was passing through them, but it was much higher in energy than oil, and vitally needed and valuable elsewhere (assumption: not on this material planet). This has been going on for eons of time, and there were other force groups here, taking out the same material on some highly competitive basis, and the material was convertible at some distant point or civilization for something very valuable to entities far above my ability to understand....

Again, there was the feeling of being the pumping station attendant, the approach of the entity down the beam... the search of my mind... I mentally (orally also?) asked who they were, and received an answer that I could not translate or understand. Then I felt them beginning to leave, and I asked for some actual indication that they had been there, but was rewarded only with paternal amusement. Then they seemed to soar up into the sky, while I called after them, pleading. Then I was sure that their mentality and intelligence were far beyond my understanding. It is an impersonal, cold intelligence, with none of the emotions of love or compassion which we respect so much, yet this may be the omnipotence we call God. Visits such as these in mankind's past could well have been the basis for all of our religious beliefs, and our knowledge today could provide no better answers than we could a thousand years past. By this time, it was getting light, and I sat down and cried, great deep sobs as I have never cried before, because I knew without any qualification or future hope of change that the God of my childhood, of the churches, of religion throughout the world was not as we worshipped him to be -- that for the rest of my life, I would 'suffer' the loss of this illusion.[15]

This modern, twentieth century impression of "something like oil" as a valuable commodity which is being pumped to ultraterrestrial entities (Archons) was perceived by the ancient gnostics as "dew":

"What then is the interest of the Archons in opposing the exodus of the

soul from the world? The gnostic answer is thus recounted by Epiphanius:

They say that the soul is the food of the Archons and Powers without which they cannot live, because [the soul] is of the dew from above and gives them strength."[16]

As monads of the imaginal realm, each Archon seeks to maintain itself, and will conceivably say or do whatever is necessary to gain our attention and worship. This is the origin of the "gods," entities demanding worship which they need in the same way we need food in order to exist. Without worship, a god starves and is absorbed (eaten) by some other entity. The loveless paranoia found in many modern fundamentalist sects can be explained from just this perspective -- any deity that demands worship is unworthy of it on the face of it.

This cruel and arrogant (from our point of view) attitude of the Archons is only natural from their point of view if we compare their behavior with the way that we treat the animals and plants we use for food in our own dimension. No one I know of considers the "feeling," or ultimate welfare, of the chickens, steaks or carrots they eat to stay alive.

From a potato's point of view, even a peaceful vegetarian is an arbitrary predator on its right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." However, from a human point of view, the entelechy of a potato is to be eaten, digested and ultimately transformed by humans. What was potato last week is me today. In theory, the potato has attained a higher level of awareness, though the potato may be forgiven for not seeing it that way.

The competition for food is arguably the predominant cause of strife on this planet. Such a system mandates the production of psychic energy in the form of stress, pain, fear and aggression. If the physical body can only survive by eating physical food, the subtle bodies conceivably also require nourishment consisting of the same stuff they are made of, i.e., thoughts, emotions, drives, etc. This is presumably the "food" that we produce for the Archons. What may be a belief in the Christian Trinity or Islamic Jihad to humans, may be the equivalent of a T-bone steak to entities of the imaginal realm who depend upon that belief for their

existence. A hungry Archon will apparently do anything to convince you to feed it. The psychiatric literature is saturated with examples of "inner voices" demanding absurd levels of obedience to highly questionable belief systems. These are often qualitatively very little different from some of the more bizarre forms of dogma in the world's religions.

Who can say that belief is not a form of energy, is not food or fuel used in more abstract realms of existence by entities we have always perceived as gods? Whoever or whatever these entities may be, it is essential for the shaman to realistically come to terms with them. If "they" in some strangely dissociated way are "us," then we should integrate the parent/child polarity within us and embrace our destiny as adults. If they are truly "others," then we need to learn how to negotiate with them, if not exactly as equals, then at least with respect on both sides. Presumably any effective shaman has learned how to attain this balance.

We know so little about the mysteries of consciousness that it is premature, if not arrogant, to make definitive pronouncements about the identities of these inner voices. It is certainly possible that we are encountering true plant teachers as well as other discarnate intelligences, in addition to dissociated fragments of our own personalities! The psyche is nothing if not a multiverse containing a multiplicity of forces -- all the more reason to skeptically evaluate each of their messages.

Only a very small child would uncritically accept the rap of someone he just met on the street. It is a New Age truism that many are playing precisely that role; the literature is replete with examples of would be "shamans" surrendering their will and discrimination to any strange force pontificating parental guidance. An insight from the Magickal tradition (Western shamanism) offers directions for proceeding in these realms of the psyche:

The testing of the spirits is the most important branch of the whole tree of Magick.
Without it, one is lost in the jungle of delusion.
Every spirit, up to God himself, is ready to deceive you if possible, to

make himself out more important than he is;
in short, to lay in wait for your soul in 333 separate ways.... Let [the Magician] be aware of the thousand subtle
attacks and deceptions that he will experience,
carefully testing the truth of all with whom he speaks.
Thus a hostile being may appear clothed with glory; the appropriate pentagram will in such case cause him to shrivel or decay.
Practice will make the student infinitely wary in such matters.[17]

This book holds to the Shamanic model of multiple dimensions, accessed via human consciousness, in which dissociated intelligences feed off of human belief systems the way that we eat hamburger. It is to these entities' advantage to keep us ignorant of their agendas; they would forfeit independent existence if we chose to become gods ourselves by devouring their energy instead of vice-versa. As it is written in the Upanishads, and emphasized here for the third time: "it is not pleasant to the Devas that men should know this."

It follows that the wisely intentional use of any psychedelic drug is as a self-integrating, self-empowering catalyst. In this way the gods (Devas, Archons, spirits, belief complexes, etc.) cannot coerce our worship -- we coerce theirs in the form of enhanced personal power. Obviously it behooves all psychedelic explorers to prudently evaluate the kinds of "allies" they choose to integrate into their psyches in this way. The higher the level of unification the better; otherwise it is seductively easy to become entrapped within dimensional resonances of dubious ultimate value.

NOTES

1.Blake, Ian (1993). "A Question of ethics," Crash Collusion #3, Austin, TX, Spring, p. 13.
2.Danielou, A. (1966). "The influence of sound phenomena on human consciousness," Psychedelic Review, No. 7, p. 20.
3.McKenna, T. (1991). The Archaic Revival, Harper, S.F., p. 35.
4.Maria Sabina, quoted in Estrada, A. (1981). Maria Sabina: Her Life and Chants, Ross-Erikson Inc.,Santa Barbara, pp. 90-91.

5.Ibid., p. 205, passim
6.(Channeled communication from mushroom spirit to): Oss & Oeric (1976). Psilocybin Magic Mushroom Grower's Guide, And/Or Press, Berkeley, pp. 8-9.
7.Estrada, op. cit., p. 110
8.J. Lang, (Pseudonym)(1938). "The other side of hallucinations," American Journal of Psychiatry, 94:1087-97
9.Prefatory quotation (presumably from the mushroom "Deva") in: Peele, S.L. (1982). Lepiota Peele -- a newly discovered hallucinogenic mushroom, Xerox sheet, Florida Mycology Research Center, Pensacola
10. "The Thunder, Perfect Mind," in Robinson, J.M.,ed. (1988). The Nag Hammadi Library, Harper & Row, S.F., p. 297.
11. P. Hawken (1976). The Magic of Findhorn, Bantam, NY, p. 138.
12. Thomas Lyttle (circa 1987). "Drug Based Religions and Contemporary Drug Taking," Journal of Drug Issues
13. "Brihadaranyaka Upanishad," in Yutang, L., ed.(1942). The Wisdom of China and India, Modern Library, NY, p. 36.
14. Billings, R.L. (1989). The Way of the Little Clowns, pp. 13-15. (Unpublished monograph; no further data available.).
15. Monroe, R. (1977). Journeys Out of The Body, Anchor/Doubleday, Garden City, NJ, p. 261.
16. Jonas, H. (1963). The Gnostic Religion, Beacon Press, Boston, p. 169
17. Crowley, A. (1976). Magick in Theory and Practice, Dover, NY, pp. 147, 388.

Chapter Six
THE ENTITIES OF THE IMAGINAL REALM - PART 2

Some ufologists... are writing of the penetration into our reality of parallel worlds, even other universes. [Jacques] Vallee, for example, now states, "I believe that the UFO phenomenon represents evidence for other dimensions beyond spacetime; the UFOs may not come from ordinary space, but from a multiverse which is all around us." Interestingly, the [UFO] abductees themselves... speak, including under hypnosis, of the sense that they have of the penetration into their consciousness of other dimensions beyond our familiar space/time reality.[1]

What's it like to encounter an entity from mind-space while under the influence of a psychedelic substance? More specifically, how does a modern Westerner process such an adventure in the absence of any culturally sanctioned framework to give it meaning? The ancient myths and religions of humankind seldom reflect current experience anymore. They've been replaced by the harsh new standards of science which condescendingly proclaim all other ways of knowing to be illusory. It is hardly surprising then that the "gods" now encountered are often decked out in the trappings of science fiction, that art form which is perhaps the

closest thing we have to an unus mundus encompassing both contemporary Techno-Logic and the imaginal realm.

Extraterrestrial themes are a firmly established motif of our evolving mythos. The UFO contact is now seen by many investigators to be an interface between inner and outer dimensions, analogous to a kind of involuntary Shamanic encounter. It is a significant fact that Psychotropic drugs, proven catalysts for accessing the mythic realms of the psyche, frequently evoke alien contact experiences. Terence McKenna describes extraterrestrial and UFO themes as typical psychedelic events:

UFO contact is perhaps the motif most frequently mentioned by people who take psilocybin....
They encounter another space with UFOs and aliens -- classic little green men...
The UFOs come from another dimension; one could almost say they come from beyond death.
They come from a dimension somehow totally different from our own, but tied up with the human psyche in a way that is puzzling,alarming, and reassuring -- and Shamanic.[2]

The following is an account of an "alien contact" experience of my own. I believe it is fairly typical, and I will later compare it with some quotations from other contexts. This adventure took place as part of a scientific DMT (N,N-Dimethyltryptamine) study at a major university. The protocol called for two administrations of the drug. The first was a threshold dose to acquaint me with its effects; the second was a maximum safe dose for my body weight to provide full scope for the DMT experience. Here are my notes from the second administration:

Thursday, January 14,1993, 9:15 AM to 9:30 AM
Set: -- Continuation of protocol from
yesterday. Now 0.4 mg/kg = 26.56 mg DMT i.v.
A "*maximum dose*."
Setting: *UNM hospital*, Room 529, East Wing.

The initial come-on was similar to the sound and lights of one of those brain wave machines,
but it reached a climax almost instantly and "sonic boomed" me into another reality.
Despite "knowing better," my gut reaction was still one of disorientation and shock.
There's nothing you can read that will prepare you for what it feels like to go from zero to 100 Mph in 1.3
seconds -- catapulted from "normal" consensus reality one moment into a totally bizarre,
profoundly alien space the next!
Nothing written here can convey either what it was or even what it was like.
Crudely, approximately, I found myself approaching a "Space Station" (a long, beige
colored, triangular-shaped "landing platform")which was below and to my right.
There were at least two entities (one on either side of me),
guiding me to the platform. Although I didn't actually "see" them, their presences were clearly felt.
I was aware of many other beings inside the space station -- automatons: android-like
creatures that "looked" (all this transcends ordinary visual description) like a cross
between crash dummies and the Empire troops from Star Wars,
except that they were living beings, not robots.
They were doing some kind of routine technological work and paid no attention to me.
Again, everything was speeded up -- compared with time as experienced in"consensus" reality,
things happen at least twice as fast in the DMT realm.
The imagery was pouring in too rapidly to process and integrate;
that, and its profoundly alien content was what initially threw me off.

But this was paltry compared with what happened next. In a state of overwhelmed shock and confusion, I opened my eyes to see the doctor's

nurse-assistant horribly transformed into a grotesque "clown," with huge, protrubant red lips maybe 20-times enlarged from normal...that's the predominant image: most of the rest is now mercifully repressed. The impression was that she had been replaced by an alien entity. On LSD, I've seen people's faces distorted, but the distortions were based upon the person's "real" face -- I could still recognize them. What I saw on DMT had no connection to anything I could remotely associate with this woman.

At this point I became suddenly nauseous, and asked for something to vomit into (I still had enough awareness of who and where I was not to want to puke on myself). A receptacle was not available, so I was handed a wadded-up hospital gown. When I opened my eyes, I couldn't recognize what I'd been given (thus further disorienting me): I was holding what I imagine "ectoplasm" is supposed to look like: a weird, other worldly substance: "etheric cotton."
It seemed to be all aura, without substance --perhaps the visible vibrations of everyone who had ever worn that gown: sick people, dying people: Total Mystery. Although terrified, I didn't actually panic, but I was aware of wanting the experience to stop right now, and feared being in the state indefinitely. Soon after this it diminished rapidly: I was firmly down after fifteen minutes, in normal awareness within half an hour. Amazingly, the subjective experience felt like no more than two minutes -- maybe even less!

This experience took place in a "scientific" context utilizing pure synthetic DMT, a drug famous for the extremely brief duration of extremely bizarre, yet amazingly consistent effects. Compare the following DMT encounters with the general content of my own experience:

...I was in a large space and saw what seemed to be thousands of the entities.
They were rapidly passing something to and fro among themselves, and were looking intently at me, as if to say "See what we are doing!" ...

Subject V

...I passed abruptly through to another realm,losing all awareness of my body. It was as if there were alien beings there waiting for me, and I recall that they spoke to me as if they had been awaiting my arrival, but I cannot remember exactly what was said ... Subject M

...Not only did I have what I can only call a "close encounter," I was left with two thoughts. First, they were waiting for me, and they were not "friendly." ...[On the] third attempt [it] seemed like they could not wait for me to experiment. In this event, I did not have actual contact, but rather "felt" them wanting to get into my consciousness. The actual experience was far more frightening than any major "trip" previously experienced ... Subject S[3]

While not true in every case, DMT explorers consistently report high levels of fear associated with their intrusions into the imaginal realm. Although the brevity of the experience enables one to manage one's terror fairly well, it is difficult to imagine what it would be like to endure such fright for longer than a few minutes. Here's the way another investigator describes this state:

It is not a trip I can take such as I would take a trip with LSD, peyote, or mushrooms, it is a trip which unequivocally takes me.... I was humbled and awed by the terrifying glory of it all. Terrifying? I was scared shitless with no place to shit.... Can we ants, who call ourselves human, presume to know anything about the capabilities of God or what he has in store for us?[4]

Assuredly, psychedelics can provide access to realms far removed from anything we would identify as "consensus reality." These quintessentially Shamanic catalysts evoke Shamanic states of consciousness and any would be explorer of such realms must be willing and prepared to endure what can only be called the terror and stress of a Shamanic initiation. Obviously, this is not for everyone, or even very many of us.

It is significant that many of these explorations have amazing similarities with what has come to be known as the "Alien Abduction" syndrome, experiences which do not typically involve drugs of any kind. Whitley Strieber, a multiple abductee,has written of the almost overwhelming terror that always accompanies these events, and anyone who has experienced the full effects of a tryptamine hallucinogen, such as DMT, will quickly empathize with his descriptions. The UFO contact/abductee phenomenon manifests too many themes analogous to psychedelic states and Shamanic initiation to be regarded as unrelated.

Fear confuses us and holds us back. It is our primary obstacle. Successful confrontation with it is the breakthrough that leads to understanding. Whether by accident or design, the visitors took me on a fabulous and terrible journey through my fears. Whatever my worst imagining, actual experience intensified it a hundred times.... Learn to live at a high level of uncertainty. Only by doing this will we begin to gain the rigorously clear and objective outlook we need to perceive what is happening correctly.... [The visitors] have the ability to enter the mind and affect thought, and can accomplish amazing feats with this skill.... Suppressing and denying fear are useless. I discovered how to accept my fear and not be surprised by it.... The more frightening they got, the stronger I became.... They never sought to destroy me with an assault beyond my strength.
Thus they can hardly be called evil. Based on the actual outcome of what they did to me, they must be counted the allies of our growth.... The whole point of it seems to me to involve strengthening the soul. Certainly this has been central to my relationship with them.... Really facing the visitors means accepting that one may also endure great fear ... and become free of all fear.[5]

This is as good a contemporary description of Shamanic will and intent as I've come across, and may be used as a guiding principle when exploring the imaginal realm. The fact that the "aliens" are able to enter our

three-dimensional world, seemingly at will, suggests that they utilize Shamanic principles analogous to our own when we project into their space. In other words, it appears that the way of the shaman is a two-way street and that the ideal of living in the unus mundus or One World appeals impartially to the denizens of any dimension. The "shamans" of all worlds have probably always known this, and the principle suggests the possibility of true interdimensional alliances for those powerful and knowledgeable enough to create them. In the present context, whatever the UFO encounter may be, it represents at least the possibility of an ally relationship; a traditional Shamanic connection with a hidden power for the purpose of healing the ills of the tribe.

When a DMT-containing substance is combined with a monoamine oxidase inhibitor, such as harmaline (a concept to be described in Part II of this book), one has the basic formula for ayahuasca, the beverage used by South American shamans to access and manipulate hyperspace. In contrast to pure DMT, ayahuasca experiences typically last several hours. Although very strange and frightening by consensus-reality standards, an ayahuasca trip is not usually quite as overpowering as DMT taken all by itself. The following is a different kind of entity contact described by a Westerner who ingested ayahuasca in the Amazon:

It was always frightening to drink ayahuasca.
The visions it produced were rarely the visions one wanted to see, and even wonderful visions were difficult to reconcile with ordinary reality....

Then, another voice spoke. "Hello," it said.
There was no one I could see, just a voice, but not one I recognized.
"Hello," it said again.
"Who are you?" I asked, hoping it was just a voice I was inventing.
"You know who I am," it said plainly.
I did. I sensed it was the spirit of ayahuasca.
It wasn't just an image or a vision.... It felt like I was in the presence of something unfathomable.

The idea seemed crazy to me, even at that time, but I also knew it was true.
I was awestruck. I believed in the spirits of things, and I knew the power of ayahuasca, but
I'd never imagined anything like that disembodied voice.
I opened my eyes, hoping it would go away if I ignored it.
It didn't. It was just waiting me out.
"What do you want?" I asked, finally.
"You're the one who called me," it said.
"You're the one who keeps calling me."
"I didn't mean to. I just wanted to... see things..."
The voice said that wasn't true. It said I had called because I needed to confront my desires and fears, and my immense sorrow, and I was getting what I needed. The voice said that it was a time for cleansing...
I knew what it said was true, and my initial fear of its presence began to subside. Then it asked me if I would let it enter. It seemed such a strange request that I was taken aback. The ayahuasca was already inside me, I said. The voice said no, that wasn't what it meant.
Immediately I had the vision of a snake wrapping itself around my head. I saw my head open, as if my brain had been cut in half. It looked like the honeycombs of a beehive. Dozens of snakes appeared and began sliding into the tunnels of my brain. At first it felt wonderful, as if an immense power was entering me, but then I wasn't sure that I should let it in. I remembered Julio's warning that some spirits are good, others are evil. I was afraid I was dealing with an evil one. What if it wasn't the spirit of ayahuasca; or if it was, what if it was an awful, dark aspect of it?
I asked the, voice what the snakes meant -- why they had to enter me -- but I didn't get an answer. Part of me thought it was a test. Another part knew that if the snakes disappeared into my brain, I would never get them out. The thought was horrifying.
Suddenly, I knew I had to get those snakes out of my brain. I began pulling them out by their tails. They were strong and hard to dislodge, but the more I fought them the more certain I became that the voice wasn't the real spirit of ayahuasca. It wouldn't have asked to enter me in such a disturbing way. I was

fighting for my life. I feared that if I lost I would be enslaved forever.
The moment I got the last snake out, I began to doubt my decision... I felt that I had failed a test and missed an extraordinary opportunity. I asked the voice why it seemed to be testing me. The voice answered that it had already given me so many gifts that I should have some faith and trust. The voice didn't sound angry or disappointed. It just said I shouldn't ask for so much without giving anything in return. Then it disappeared, and I knew my visions were over for that evening.[6]

In the context of the preceding discussion, what seems to be described here is an aborted potentialally relationship. The author may surely be excused for rejecting something he didn't understand; any prudent explorer of hyperspace is well-advised to do the same. With sufficient knowledge and experience, however, it is possible to imagine a mutually advantageous affiliation, a true Shamanic alliance for the attainment of knowledge and power.

What sort of knowledge? What sort of power?

Consider this: when on my DMT trip, I observed the wadded-up hospital gown as "etheric cotton" or "ectoplasm." I believe I was seeing what shamans see in their curing trances. Had I known more about this state of consciousness, I feel I might have been able to shamanically influence a material object from hyperspace. The principle is not as fantastic as it sounds once one realizes how much habit and belief coerce our perception. This is the tyranny of consensus reality -- anything outside of it is automatically defined in our culture as madness or deliberate criminal deviance from social norms.

Sorcerers describe their knowledge, their pursuit, as the capacity to see energy directly, see the essence of things. What we do in the world of everyday life is to perceive only what we already know. We revalidate the world. Socialization gives us the concepts of what things are, and thus, we never really perceive what is actually there. We know "truth" a priori and all we do from then on is validate it.

Sorcery is the act of erasing the a priori. Our world is real because, collectively, we have all agreed to it... Sorcerers know that something far more vast exists than what we have agreed to let our senses

perceive.[7]

A concept from Jivaro shamanism further illustrates this general idea:

These tsentsak or spirit helpers are the main powers believed to cause and cure illness in daily life.
To the non-shaman they are normally invisible, and even shamans can perceive them
only in an altered state of consciousness... Each tsentsak has an ordinary and nonordinary aspect...
The ordinary aspect is an ordinary material object, as seen without drinking ayahuasca.
But the nonordinary and "true" aspect of the tsentsak is revealed to the shaman by taking the drink.[8]

Now, the hospital gown was hardly a power object or spirit helper, but, like Peter's Tibetan cup in Chapter One, it was charged with energy which could be clearly seen while in a psychedelic trance. Anyone having a similar experience would immediately understand the rationale behind Shamanic curing practices -- given the proper state of consciousness, it is totally plausible that normally invisible forces can be manipulated "from the other side" to create consequences in the material realm.
This, of course, is the essence of shamanism.
It is also the essence of shamanism to acquire helpers (allies, teachers) who instruct one how to manipulate the artifacts of non-ordinary reality. In traditional cultures these entities are often seen as the resident spirits of the hallucinogenic plants. Here is a contemporary Western description of an encounter with such a mentor:

On both occasions, we contacted a "teacher" who identified himself with the Syrian Rue plant.
During our discussions with him (which were out loud; subvocalizing was ineffective)
the plant teacher showed us visions, answered questions and provided specific health,

emotional and psychological advice. The "voice in the head" phenomenon was not as strongly constituted as on high dose mushrooms.
However, the vividness, clarity, and understandability of the visionary illustrations which often accompanied the conversations were striking. Intense feelings (which shifted with the visions), changes in tone of voice and manner of speaking, including glossolalia (as recorded on tape) and strong contact highs were additional phenomena noted. The plant teacher had a definite personality which was strongly male, very friendly, humorous, with an interest in storytelling bordering on the garrulous.[9]

The Syrian Rue plant (Peganum harmala) is a fascinating species which will be discussed at length in the chapter on ayahuasca and its analogues. Suffice it to say here that this botanical offers a significant potential for modern Shamanic experimentation. Some scholars have hypothesized that Syrian Rue is the mysterious Soma praised in the Aryan Vedas, though in the absence of a DMT-containing admixture plant, such conjectures are not entirely convincing. In the above experiment, a homemade P. harmala extract was combined with synthetic DMT to create a novel blend chemically comparable to the Amazonian ayahuasca brews.
The "ally" elicited from this unique combination provided a wide range of information in its visions:

-- Plant diagrams and information on watering, plant diseases and placement of the Syrian Rue plant in our garden.
-- A diagram of a human heart, showing the auricular node and the neurology of the heartbeat.
-- Art and artifacts from the Old European civilization c. 10,000 B.C., e.g., Catal Huyuk; including pottery and statuary.
-- A vision of the Goddess, holding the plant teacher and the human contactee intertwined in her hands.
-- Various pieces of psychological and relationship advice, including insights into both our childhoods.[10]

For the average Westerner, such data are incredible, yet any shaman would regard experiences like these as par for the course. Obviously we have barely scratched the surface of an unknown (to us) reality and have a great deal of catch-up learning to do. As previously noted, it is impossible to say at this time who these entities are, or how much the neophyte should trust the information they provide. These are all realms to be explored in the coming years by pioneering psychonauts. It is hoped that this book will provide an initial, if incomplete, reference point for the explorations that lie ahead of us.

Notes

1. Mack, J.E., MD (1993). "The 'Alien Abduction'Phenomenon," Venture Inward, March/April, p.38.
2. McKenna, T. (1991). "A conversation over saucers," in The Archaic Revival, Harper, S.F., p. 62.
3. Meyer, P. (1993). "Apparent communication with discarnate entities induced by dimethyl- tryptamine (DMT)," Psychedelic Monographs and Essays #6, p. 40. passim.
4. Williamson, D. (1985). "Recreational and sacramental use of 5-Meo-DMT," The Psychozoic Press #10, Summer.
5. Strieber, W. (1988). Transformation: the Breakthrough, William Morrow, NY, p. 11, passim.
6. Gorman, P. (1992). "Journeys with ayahuasca, the vine of the little death," Shaman's Drum, Fall, pp. 49-57.
7. Donner, F. (1992). "Being in Dreaming," Body Mind Spirit, Nov./Dec.
8. Harner, M. (1980). The Way of the Shaman, Harper & Row, NY, p. 16.
9. Grade and Zarkov. (1986). "An Indo-European plant teacher," Notes From Underground, Number 10, Berkeley.
10. Ibid.

Part Two
PSYCHEDELIC CATALYSTS

Plants interested me too, but not in a scientific sense. I was attracted to them for a reason I could not understand, and with a strong feeling that they ought not to be pulled up and dried. They were living beings which had meaning only so long as they were growing and flowering -- a hidden, secret meaning, one of God's thoughts. They were to be regarded with awe and contemplated with philosophical wonderment. What the biologist had to say about them was interesting, but it was not the essential thing.

Jung, C.G. -- Memories, Dreams, Reflections, p. 83.

Every tree, every plant, has a spirit. People may say that a plant has no mind. I tell them that a plant is alive and conscious. A plant may not talk, but there is a spirit in it that is conscious, that sees everything, which is the soul of the plant, its essence, what makes it alive. The channels through which water and sap move are the veins of the spirit. I feel a great sorrow when trees are burned, when the forest is destroyed. I feel sorrow because I know that human beings are doing something very wrong. When one takes ayahuasca one can sometimes hear how the trees cry when they are going to be cut down. They know beforehand, and they cry. And the spirits have to go to other places, because their physical part, their house, is destroyed.

Luna, Luis E., and Amaringo, P. (1991). Ayahuasca Visions: The Religious Iconography of a Peruvian
Shaman, North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, Pg. 33. Reprinted with permission.

Chapter Seven

THE BELLADONNA ALKALOIDS

Going into other worlds is fascinating, but the worlds datura takes people to can be frightening, populated by monsters and devils and filled with violent, frenzied energy.[1]

The "Belladonna alkaloids" are powerful hallucinogens found in many members of the *Sanaceae,* a large and immensely useful botanical famiily which includes the various potato, tomato, pepper, eggplant and tobacco species. Each of the psychoactive alkaloids — atropine, scopolamine and hyoscyamine — is present in the Old World Bella Madonna or Deadly Nightshade plant, hence their earliest classification under that species' name. More accurately called "Solanaceous drugs," or "Tropane

alkaloids," these chemicals are also found in a wide variety of belladonna's Old and New World cousins, many with names that conjure up images of witchcraft and black magic: Mandrake, Henbane, Datura... The solanaceous plants with the longest history of shamanic usage in the New World are the daturas. *Datura inoxia* (formerly *Datura meteloides)* is a native of the American Southwest. Carlos Castaneda has don Juan call it "the Devil's Weed," but it is less pejoratively known among the Zuni, Navajo and other tribes as "Sacred Datura." This is a large bushy species with fetid-smelling foliage — indeed, one of its common names is "stinkweed." The dankly malodorous leaves stand in sharp contrast to this plant's Lily-sized, night-blooming white flowers, which exude a heady and distinctly erotic perfume.

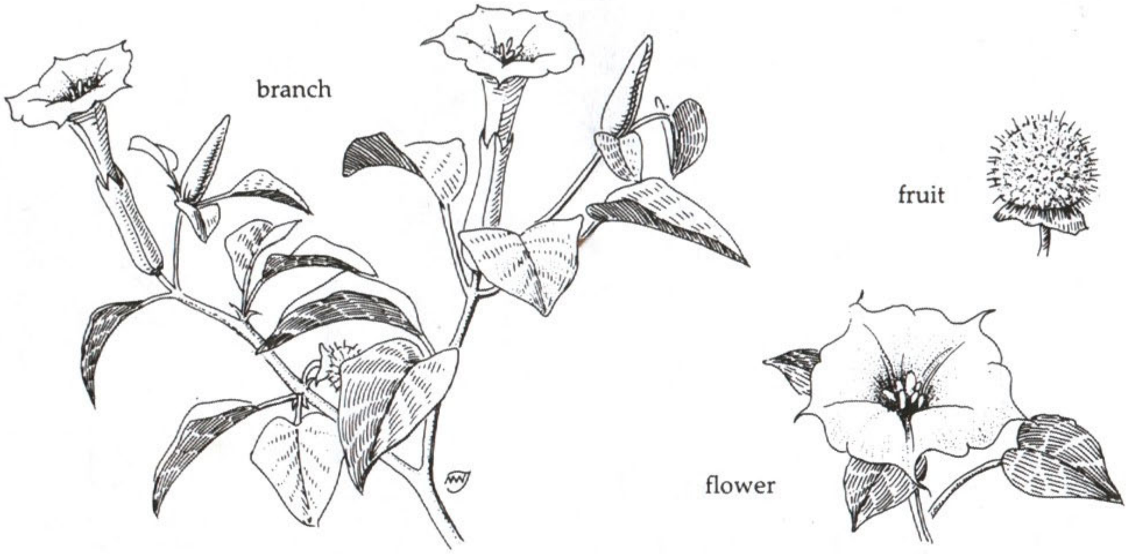


Figure 7-1
Datura inoxia, *also known as "Sacred Datura" or Devil's Weed."*

Datura inoxia is a plant with a definite presence. It would be unusual for anyone seeing it for the first time to pass it by, though one might be hard put to explain exactly what about it feels so strangely compelling. Yet compelling it is — every year small but significant numbers of people (usually teenagers) are admitted to hospital emergency rooms and drug-abuse clinics for treatment of acute datura poisoning. Much of the contemporary interest in these plants is doubtless traceable to the writings of Carlos Castaneda, who popularized both datura and shamanism with his ostensibly factual book, *The Teachings of Don Juan.* In this and subsequent volumes, datura is glamorized as a kind of astral projection catalyst and don Juan is presented as an archetypal shaman who teaches his apprentices the secrets of navigating the imaginal realm. Unfortunately, there is considerable evidence to suggest that Castaneda's books are no more than very convincing novels and that anyone using them as authentic shamanic manuals is well advised to exercise extreme caution; datura can and often does kill those who use it improperly.

Inoxia's cousin, *Datura stramonium,* also known as Thornapple and Jimson weed, is a mostly Eastern species probably introduced from the West Indies. The Indians used to refer to it as the white man's plant because of its proclivity for growing in garbage dumps. Like its Western cousin, D. stra*monium* is large and bushy, but with smaller, magenta-tinted white flowers. There are also tropic varieties, such as the *Brunfelsia* and *Brugmansia, two* genera of so-called "tree daturas" widely used South American shamanism. These are often included as admixture ingredients in both the *aya-huasca* and San Pedro brews to be discussed later.

Although the solanaceous drugs have a long and colorful history of use in both Old World witchcraft and New World shamanism, there is an

over-whelming consensus of opinion that they are dangerous and unpredictable for any but a Master shaman to ingest. Even don Juan admits: "To tame the devil's weed into an ally is one of the most diffi-cult tasks I know."[2]

There is no doubt that the datura are powerful plants. Just growing one is a bewitching experience; a palpable aura of temptation and forbidden knowledge seems to emanate from her.

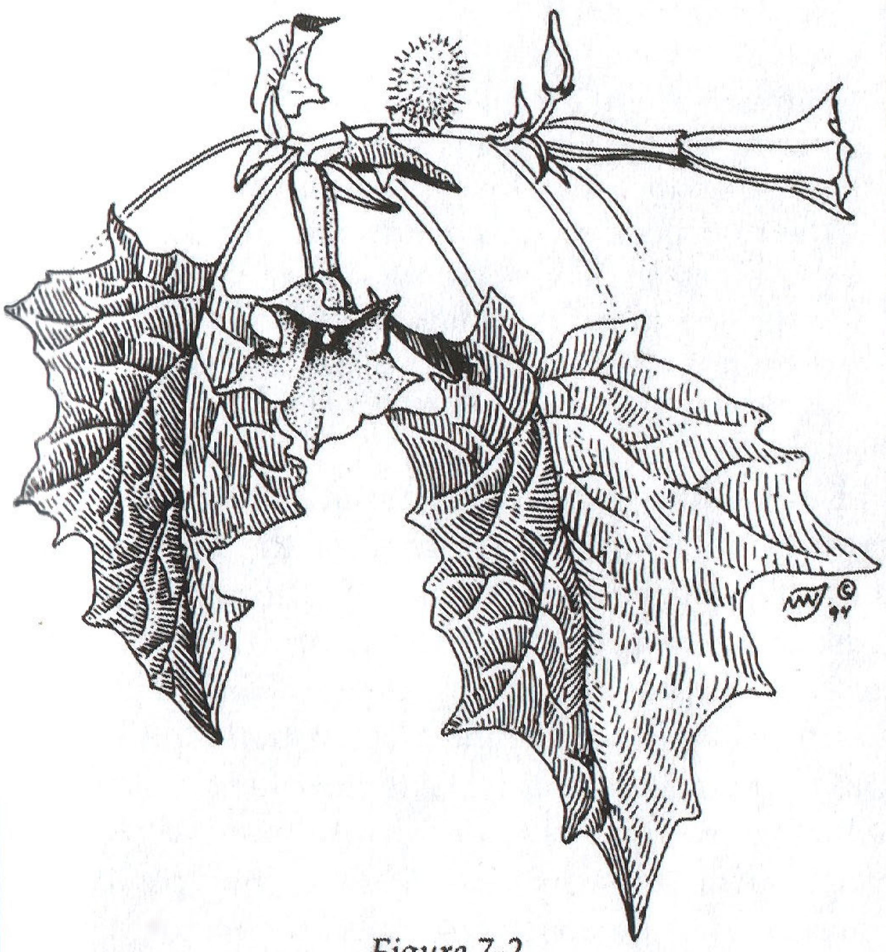


Figure 7-2
Datura stramonium, *also known as "Thornapple" and "Jimson weed."*

leaves and flowers as you watch her steadily expand from a tiny seedling into a large bush. (I the feminine pronoun because there is an

almost universal attribution of female energy to this genus.) In fact, general associations with the dark side of the feminine are common to all of the belladonna alkaloid plants. For example, consider the Latin designation for the Deadly Nightshade, *Altropa belladonna,* from which this entire class of compounds takes its name. This is a combination of Altropos, one of the three fates of Greek mythology, 2nd belladonna, an Italian word meaning "beautiful lady."

Atropos (which translates as "inevitable," "Unalterable" or "inflexible") is the goddess who cuts the thread of life at the moment of death. She is usually portrayed holding a pair of shears, and is a rurally regarded as the most fearsome of the fates because she is the one whose sole purpose is to kill you. The name belladonna, "beautiful lady," refers an era when Italian women used to drop night-shade tinctures into their eyes to dilate the pupils and make them look sexy. (The pupil-dilating properties of atropine are still utilized by modern opthamologists when doing eye examinations today.)

When you combine the ideas of death, fate and a beautiful woman, you get the concept of the *femme fatale* — a sexy temptress who destroys men through their own weakness for her charms. Indeed, don Juan describes the datura "ally" as a female who "Distorts men. She gives them a taste of power too soon without fortifying their hearts and makes them domineering and unpredictable. She makes them weak in the middle of their great power."[3] It is highly significant that these plants are almost invariably associated with some form of sexual witchcraft:

The hallucinations are frequently dominated by the erotic moment.... In those days, in order to experience these sensations, young and old women would rub their bodies with the "witches salve," of which the active ingredient was belladonna or an extract of some other solanaceae.[4]

The salve referred to was the ubiquitous "flying ointment" of European witchcraft, used by witches to "fly" to the Sabbat (presumably a location in the imaginal realm) where they engaged in wild sexual orgies with the devil and his minions. This of course is reminiscent of the earlier Greek rites of Dionysus, from which medieval witchcraft almost certainly evolved:

His worshippers sought to become possessed by or assimilated to him by wild dancing.... His followers included spirits of fertility such as the satyrs, and in his ritual the phallus was prominent.[5]

It is a well-known speculation that the popular image of the witch with her broomstick harks back to a time when these women supposedly applied hallucinogenic ointments to their genitals with its handle, in effect, masturbating with it. Whether or not real witches actually used such an awkward artificial phallus, the fact remains that the salve or ointment made from the alkaloidal extractions of solanaceous plants is universally associated with aggressive female sexuality, a mystique which, in common with the *femme fatale* and witch archetypes in general, is almost the defining characteristic of the ancient goddess religions.

Figure 7-3
Atropa belladona, or "Deadly Nightshade."

The consistency of these themes suggests that the entities associated with the belladonna alkaloids are primordial earth-forces (always symbolically female) which have been brutally and systematically repressed in human consciousness for literally thousands of years. A goddess repressed is a woman scorned, and her archetype appears in the collective psyche as a dangerous and destructive entity out to revenge herself on the patriarchy that usurped her power.

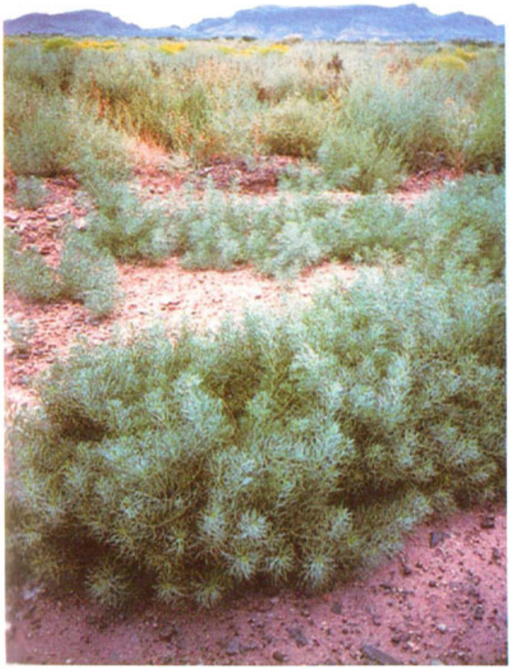
For example (to show how these themes are so tightly interwoven), our word datura is derived from the Sanskrit dhattura. As *dhatturea* ("datura poisoner") the term was used to describe members of the

fearsome and fanatical Thug sect. These worshippers of the Hindu goddess Kali employed *Datura metel* (a species native to India) to drug their sacrificial victims. Kali, the dark and destructive aspect of the Hindu mother goddess, demanded nothing less than human sacrifices from her worshippers, and it is said that the Thugs (from which our epithet for a brutal criminal is derived) offered up hundreds of thousands of victims to their goddess before the practice was finally stopped by the British overlords during the last century.

Assassination for gain was with them a religious duty, and was considered a holy and honorable profession. They had, in fact, no idea of doing wrong, and their moral feelings did not come into play. The will of the goddess by whose command and in whose honor they followed their calling was revealed to them through a very complicated system of omens. In obedience to these they often traveled hundreds of miles in company with or in the wake of, their intended victims before a safe opportunity presented itself for executing their design; and when the deed was done, rites were performed in honor of that tutelary deity, and a goodly portion of the spoil was set apart for her.[6]

Does this strange and fanatical belief system sound like a familiar strategy of the entities from the imaginal realm? Are we dealing here with a frustrated female force from mind-space seeking revenge for her repression deep within the collective psyche of humankind? If the belladonna alkaloids are specific catalysts for evoking primordial feminine energy, which typically manifests within consciousness as a *femme fatale* archetype, it suggests that we are confronting an archaic force of nature as it existed before the invention of agriculture and the patriarchal religions — the wild and untamed female before she became a male chattel domesticated to hearth and home.

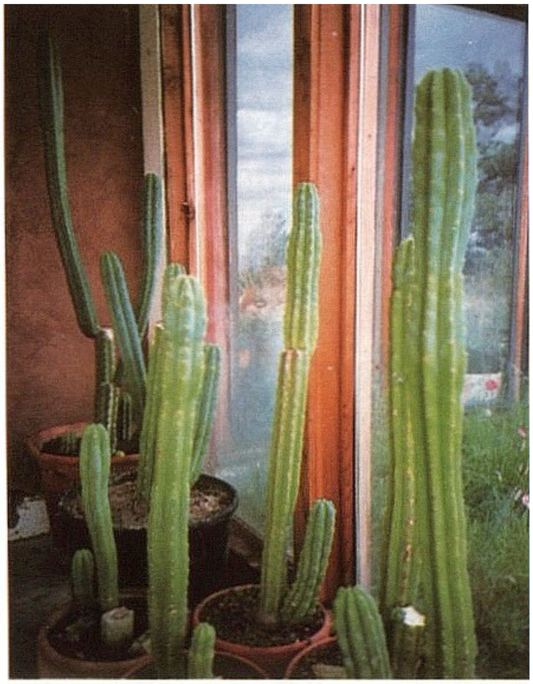
When you consider that Western male descriptions of datura trips are almost universally negative, yet that both female witches and New World shamans maintain a respectful affinity for the plant, it relates to something we already know, that the male-female polarity within the Western psyche, particularly among men, is seriously out of



Peganum harmala, or "Syrian Rue"

Brugmansia, a "Tree Datura"

Psilocybe cubensis, or "Magic Mushrooms"



Trichocereus pachanoi, the San Pedro Cactus

Phalaris arundinacea, also known as "Reed Canary Grass"

Lophophora williamsii, the Peyote Cactus

balance. If the quality of one's consciousness determines the quality of one's experience of the imaginal realm, it follows that any

unintegrated personality arrogantly penetrating into the jurisdiction of the Goddess is courting grave misfortune. The name "devil's weed" is another clue to understanding these interconnections, since the devil has always been associated with witchcraft, an activity mostly practiced by free-living women. Its rites included having sexual intercourse with the "horned god," an activity obviously only safely possible within the realms of hyperspace once the free sexuality of the goddess religions had been stamped out by patriarchal monotheism. Such defiant freedom was an intolerable challenge to the authority of the Inquisition and to any males out to make possessions of "their" females. When Castaneda has don Juan say, "To tame the devil's weed into an ally is one of the most difficult tasks I know..." he is understating the case considerably! We are dealing here with one of the most primitive of all archetypes, and it is folly to imagine that such a force could ever be "tamed." Utilized carefully and wisely, perhaps, but never tamed, since this archetype is by definition untamable, though the possibility of eventual integration is an intriguing hypothesis. At any rate, don Juan's warning must be taken seriously by any would-be explorer of the imaginal realm; seeking datura for an ally should be attempted only by established Masters of hyperspace - think of it as post-graduate work.

Unlike classical shamans, the sorcerer in Europe had his trance encounters with the spirit world on occasions distinguished from his *manipulation* of that supernatural world. I believe the reason for this major distinguishing feature of European witchcraft lies in the nature of the drugs they were using. Specifically, the solanaceous hallucinogens are so powerful that it is essentially impossible for the user to control his mind and body sufficiently to perform ritual activity at the same time. In addition, the state of extended sleep following the period of initial excitation, sleep which can extend for three or four days, together with the typical amnesia, made this hardly a convenient method for daily practice of witchcraft.

Furthermore, there is some ethnographic evidence that too frequent use of the solanaceous drugs can permanently derange the mind.[7]

None of this is to say that one should not cultivate these magical plants and get to know them as physical entities. Castaneda himself claims that this was a part of his initiation, and fictional or not, it is worthwhile advice for anyone interested in growing hallucinogenic plants. I raise several specimens each of both *Datura inoxia* and *stramonium* every summer. Since they are considered weeds by the uninitiated, it is not surprising that these botanicals are very easv to grow, requiring little or no care past the seedling stage. I have seen them thriving in the poorest of desert soils, so with even minimal care and watering they usually attain a large size.

Cultivation: Needs warmth for germination, sow seeds 1/4" deep in full sun. Pretty much any soil mix works, these germinate easily within a week or two. Keep moist. Transplant young and keep up with pot sizes as roots crowd, or plant out Best growth is with ample root space and fertile mix. *D. stramonium* is an annual and will set seed, then die.... Likes sun and heat.[8]

Although *stramonium* is described as an annual plant, a *Datura inoxia* specimen in my patio sprouted from its roots the second year — this in New Mexico with its bitterly freezing winters. Greenhouse plants, potted and kept from freezing, have consistently behaved as perennials, and when I dug up an *inoxia* early this spring to make room for another plant, the root was obviously still viable. Of the two species, I favor the *inoxia* over the *stramonium,* mostly because I love its sultry white flowers and their erotic perfume.

I have cautiously experimented with smoking datura, but have never inhaled enough to really get off. One cigarette rolled from dried leaves induced a rather uninteresting "drunken" feeling, complete with a dull hangover the next morning. At minimal dosage levels, compared with an equal amount of low-grade cannabis, datura can't even compete.

The leaves are smoked... Dose should be less than 2 grams per session, done less than once a week... [Datura] can be made into extracts with ethyl alcohol. A smoke is then prepared by dipping a cigarette or herbal into the extract and letting it air dry... To control the experience of astral projection, the recommended procedure is to

fast the day before the experiment (drugs also). In the afternoon secure your room from sound and other possible distractions: telephone, visitors, etc. Smoke two large joints of datura, about 1 gram each. Then lay back and allow the "effects" to occur.[9]

It has been proved that the smoke from a Stramonium cigarette, containing 0.25 grams of Stramonium leaves contains as much as 0.5 milligrams of atropine. The leaves may be made up into cigarettes or smoked in a pipe, either alone, or with a mixture of tobacco, or with cubebs, sage, belladonna and other drugs...Dryness of the throat and mouth are to be regarded as indications that too large a quantity is being taken.[10]

If we accept the 0.5 milligram ratio of atropine to a quarter gram of datura leaves, the previously recommended dose of two grams would contain about 4 mg. of this alkaloid. It is unfortunate that the quoted source doesn't state how much scopolamine might be contained in two grams of raw material, since scopolamine is the alkaloid most responsible for datura's deleriant properties.

A dark green salve was made by pulverizing several handfuls of fresh datura leaves in a blender and melting the resulting pulp into four ounces of beeswax, one and a half pounds of lard and some inexpensive hand lotion, as needed. When smeared on the body, particularly the genital area, no especially dramatic results were noted, though subsequent lovemaking was enhanced, probably just from the novelty of the experiment. Although lotions and ointments are doubtless the safest way to experiment with the belladonna alkaloids, it should be noted that even these can kill you if they are carelessly measured or mixed with other species:

Dr. Karl Kiesewetter, a well-known historian and one of the first to experiment with flying ointments in modern times, in fact died of poisoning after one of his experiments. The plants he used in his fatal ointment included monkshood. Of all the herbs used in flying ointments, it is one of the deadliest.[11]

If the reader has *still* not intuited my personal opinion concerning the ingestion of any of the tropane alkaloids, the following quotations

should make it clearer. Here's a belladonna experience:

I took about one gram, compressed silver dollar size, dried leaves of the Belladonna Deadly Nightshade and in a golden tea ball boiled it for about 25 minutes, then let it steep for another 10 minutes. Afterwards, with honey, I drank this ancient tea. After about 15-20 minutes, I started feeling alternating numbness and extreme tingling in the ends of fingers and toes up on to mid-forearms and calves... [The] hallucinations were quite real and, unlike dreams or other psychedelics, were more tinted with culture and people of a different though somewhat recognizable place and time. [With] eyes closed [the] visions were as real as this page of scribbling in front of you, so help me God!... The effect lasted for two days.... Dilation of pupils is slightly diminished but still there after about 30 hours.... Too strong and unnerving for a repeat performance ever!... The active alkaloids probably were closer to 200 mg. Prescription doses range around 15 mg.... Luckily for me, the dosage I took (and I foolishly took all that was given me) was extremely toxic but non-lethal for my size and weight ... Almost all sources agree... that this trip is one that few would care to repeat, and I would have to concur. Although Belladonna is extremely hallucinogenic, it is too physically unnerving in psychoactive doses to be enjoyable.[12]

The following experience was with a shamanically-mixed brew made from a South American species of tree datura:

I first felt a tingling sensation in my lips, followed soon by the same sensation in my fingertips. This felt exactly like the feeling experienced when your leg "falls asleep," when the blood rushes back. Along with the tingling, I felt a pronounced vibrating in the affected parts.... From the beginning I felt a strong urge to expectorate periodically and later realized that I was actually frothing at the mouth... I became very dizzy with vertigo, which intensified precipitously. Everything started spinning to the right yet never seemed to move.
My mind kept adjusting to the spin to set me right again. There was a complete loss of muscular coordination at this point, and I could no longer walk or even stand up... The next day, I felt extremely weak and nearly unable to move without great discomfort... My companion later noted the following effects which he experienced with the drug:

"swollen lips and heavy tongue, crazy in the head, cold sweat, stomach ache, nausea and weak vomiting, urtication, inability to walk or move, and vertigo." He also felt "the world was spinning around me like a great blue wheel. I felt that I was going to die."[13]

A final, less arduous and more poetic, description is provided by a woman, a shaman's apprentice who found the experience useful and instructive. *"Huantuj"* is the Ecuadorian term for a decoction made from the *Brugmansia* genus of tree daturas:

The shaman Celso Fiallo in Quito, Ecuador called me "pollita," "my little moth" because he believed that on the day I came to stay, his datura plants blossomed. He was referring to the datura-pollinating hummingbird moths recognized by the human skulls traced on the back of their tiny heads. From this omen I believed that the datura might be an important teacher for me.

Celso was ecstatic (as was his nature) that I would have the opportunity to meet Taita Carlos Tanguila of Archidona. Sporting an elegant shirt with pearl buttons and a hipster's grey dinner jacket, Taita Carlos looked like a Chinese beatnik strung out on opium. He and his entire family are very shy — they all giggle like children, but his ability as *ayahuascero* and administrator of *Brugmansia* [tree datura] is highly respected throughout the area. The shaman invited Celso and me to stay with him. There in the rainforest we would drink *huantuj* and *ayahuasca,* and bathe in a river filled with animal and human head-shaped stones.

It took two hours of hiking up and down muddy hills with supplies on our backs to reach Taita Carlos' plantation. Celso walked smack into barbed-wire and asked me to suck the bloody toxins from his forehead. We finally arrived at the impressive, stilt-propped structures of Taita Carlos. Like the home of a great beatnik, there were modernist *ayahuasca* drawings on the exterior walls of his huts, and large tree parts and bones hanging from the walls as sculpture.

After eating a lunch of white rice, broth, and yellow chica that comes from the palms, we retire to the teenagers' room to await the *huantuj*. Carlos and his boys ascend the stairs with this decoction made from two

handfuls of datura leaves. Taita Carlos sings to the potion and blows tobacco on it. Then Celso does his tune and we drink. We smoke cigarettes with the boy apprentices and wait. Taita Carlos tells us many things: that a dose a little larger than average could kill us; that some trips last up to twelve days: the body left behind while the spirit helicopters out over the rainforest. It is typical to go to lands not accessible in the body. Celso reminds us that this is the drink of the witches' conventions, their bodies and broomsticks left in a heap on the floor.

The first trip evokes an incapacitation of movement and extreme spatial dislocation. I can squat directly over the chamber pot to pee, which I must do very often, but I can't seem to target the bowl. A chair that seems to be directly behind me is actually several yards away and I fall to the floor. I close my eyes and open them to find the family watching me. I close them again and open to find they've disappeared, then reappeared, then disappeared once more. I try to talk with them but have no idea of what I am saying or trying to say, only the feeling of a strong intent to speak about something important. They listen very politely and smile at me. That night, the first semblance of imagery: exquisite, otherworldly objects of my mind's eye that feel very much my own (different than tryptamine visions which do not feel like one's own).

The next day we try again. Taita Carlos wants me to drink *Brugmansia* to open my eyes for the *ayahuasca* — my pupils will remain dilated for three days. This time we sit in the cooking hut with the wife and children. She is weaving a net bag and cooking soup. The kids are watching us and playing idly on the floor. Celso leaves the hut to loudly retch outside. This makes Taita Carlos nervous. He lifts the glasses of ***huantuj*** to examine the quantity and then cautiously pours a bit from each glass back into the cooking pot. We drink again and then retire to the boys' bedroom in the other hut to lie down. Now there are visions. Moving outside to pee is almost impossible, but necessary. As I enter the path to the forest I hear giggling behind me and turn to see the entire family peeking out at me from the cooking hut. They are laughing at the way I walk. Other creatures on the path are also laughing — these are elongated, suspended entities, mostly bilateral though not entirely

symmetrical, and they are gesturing at me while scratching at themselves, yawning, speaking words, enunciating non-words from their lips. It takes about five minutes to recognize these creatures as trees. They turn back into trees, then creatures, then trees.

Mounting the stairs to the room takes about an hour's time. I see a red-haired drug addict, a woman, hanging languidly from the window of our hut. She must be another patient of Taita Carlos, though we haven't been introduced. Then I realize it is not a human being at all but a large sculptural branch that hangs on the exterior wall. I call for Celso to come and see her, but he has somehow disappeared and is not where I left him. The jackets hanging on the wall pegs are infested with spirit faces.

Back in the bed I find myself suddenly accompanied by a noseless, earless old woman. I am catching on now, and am not frightened but feel deeply bemused. I turn my head slightly — she is still with me in bed, but no longer a noseless and earless old woman, now merely a bunched array of pillows. (Actually, there were no pillows.) There was no elementary school wall clock either, nor night-lit travel alarm clock next to the bed, but when I wanted to know the time of night, these appeared to tell me so. The family kept appearing and disappearing also.

The strangest illusion happened a little after midnight. Celso and I were sleeping, sharing a bed with our clothes on, as was our habit while traveling. Taita Carlos appeared in the doorway to summon me to an initiation with *ayalwasca*. His command, his summons, was fierce and impatient. I became frantic and angry because I had no sense of distance and couldn't find the bedside table with matches and candle. I began ordering Celso with bravado to get up and help me — Taita Carlos is calling! Months later, I learned that this is a classic hallucination with huantuj: the initiate is incapacitated, lying on the ground, when the shaman or plant teacher suddenly arrives. The neophyte, unable to get up, is left lying helpless with a growing feeling of panic at not being able to obey the guru's call.

Later, there were sporadic visions of extraordinary objects and events:

my sister appeared to whisper a prediction into my ear. It is said by the forest people that a drink of *huantuj* will show you the future – however frightening, however good. The shamans also believe that the datura decoction is a panacea, a viral preventive that can cure cancer, AIDS and the entire gamut of viruses for at least a year after ingestion. The next morning Celso and I discovered that the black scars of bug bites that had been lodged in my skin for three months had virtually disappeared, leaving my skin soft and smooth.

Days later, exiting the forest by the same hilly path, I kept sliding and falling on my backside into the mud. Celso preceded me, seeing nothing of it, and Taita Carlos followed. Each time I fell, Carlos and I would giggle hysterically, but by the time Celso turned around to see what was so funny I was back on my feet as if nothing had happened. Celso bumped smack into the same barbed wire on the way out as he had done on the way in.[14]

In my opinion, there are so many less demanding psychoactive plants around, that the solana-ceous species are most usefully cultivated for their aesthetic and historical interest only. Significantly perhaps (some food for thought here), these botanicals are not illegal to grow or ingest, which suggests that the authorities (remember that "archon" is Greek for "ruler") are more threatened by people altering their awareness than by committing suicide. In any event, unless one has been initiated by a bonafide shaman who truly understands how to use these plants, they are best studied and admired in space-mind rather than mind-space.

NOTES

1. Weil, A. & Rosen, W. (1983). *Chocolate to Morphine: Understanding Mind-active Drugs*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, p. 132.
2. Castaneda, C. (1968). *The Teachings of Don Juan*, Ballantine, NY, p. 49.

3. *Ibid.,* p. 48.
4. Hesse, E. (1946). *Narcotics and Drug Addiction,* New York, Philosophical Library, p. 103.
5. *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1968), Vol. 7: p. 466.
6. *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1911), Vol. 26: p. 896.
7. Harner, M. "The role of hallucinogenic plants in European witchcraft," in *Hallucinogens and Shamanism,* p. 146.
3. Anonymous (circa 1992). *Cultivation Details for Exotic Plants of the Jungle,* P.O. Box 1801, Sebas-topol, CA 95473.
9. Miller, R.A. (circa 1973) *The Magical and Ritual Use of Herbs,* O.A.K., 1421"N: 34th, Seattle, WA 98103, p. 124, *passim.*
10. Grieve, M. (1971). *A Modern Herbal* (Vol. II), Dover, NY, p. 806.
11. Wittmann, C. (1991). "Magical Flying Ointments," *The Herb Quarterly,* Fall, p. 18.
12. Lyttle, T. (1983). "A close encounter with Belladonna, black sheep of the psychedelic world," *The Psychozoic Press,* #6, Winter, pp. 38-42.
13. Plowman, T. (1977). *"Brunfelsia* in Ethnomedi-cine," *Botanical Museum Leaflets,* Harvard University, Vol. 25, No. 10, December, p. 306, *passim.*
14. Anonymous (1993). Personal communication.

Chapter Eight

D-LYSERGIC ACID AMIDE;
MORNING GLORY SEEDS, STIPA ROBUSTA

Revelations of the cause of illness or divinations are provided during the intoxication by "intermediaries" — the fantastical *badu-win* or two little girls in white who appear during the seance... The modern ritual with Morning Glory seeds now has incorporated Christian elements. Some of the names — *Semilla de la Virgen* ("seed of the Virgin") and *Hierba Maria* ("Mary's herb") — show union of the Christian with the pagan, and [are] clearly an indication that *Turbina [Rivea] corymbosa* and *Ipomoea violacea* are considered gifts from the gods.[1]

When the invading Spanish barbarians overran Mexico in the 16th and 17th Centuries, they became compulsively obsessed with obliterating the religion of the local barbarians and imposing their own harsh brand of Christianity in its place. While our knowledge of the pre-Columbian Mexican religions is fragmentary and largely confined to descriptions of some literally "heartrending" ceremonials, we do know that psychedelic plants played a large and important role in the native doctrines. Correlating this information with the human sacrificial nature of these belief systems, it is safe to assume

that some of the darker Archons of the imaginal realm played starring roles in the formation and expression of ancient Mexican theology — as they have (in varying degrees) in most of the world's religions.

To insinuate their entheocidal objectives into the native psyche, the Catholic invaders applied the tactics of the Inquisition to enforce laws which make our contemporary "war on drugs" resemble B.B. gun battles by adolescents. Since the tides of human ingenuity often wax and wane between the roles of victim and oppressor, it comes as no surprise that the Indians' use of psychotropic plants was not obliterated by the Spanish, just expediently concealed from them.

The native use of *ololiuqui,* an entheogen frequently mentioned in the annals of the Inquisition, seemed to be especially difficult for the *conquista-dores* to crush. *Ololiuqui* is a Nahuatl word meaning "round thing," and it refers to the seed of the *coaxi-huitl,* or "snake plant," a convolvulaceous vine found growing along stream banks in Southern Mexico. Although the name of the *seed* (which contains most of the hallucinogenic alkaloids) is often incorrectly applied to the *plant,* this is a modern error in nomenclature. At the time of the conquest, the same name was also given to an entity believed to dwell within the seed who would reveal himself to his worshippers upon its ingestion.

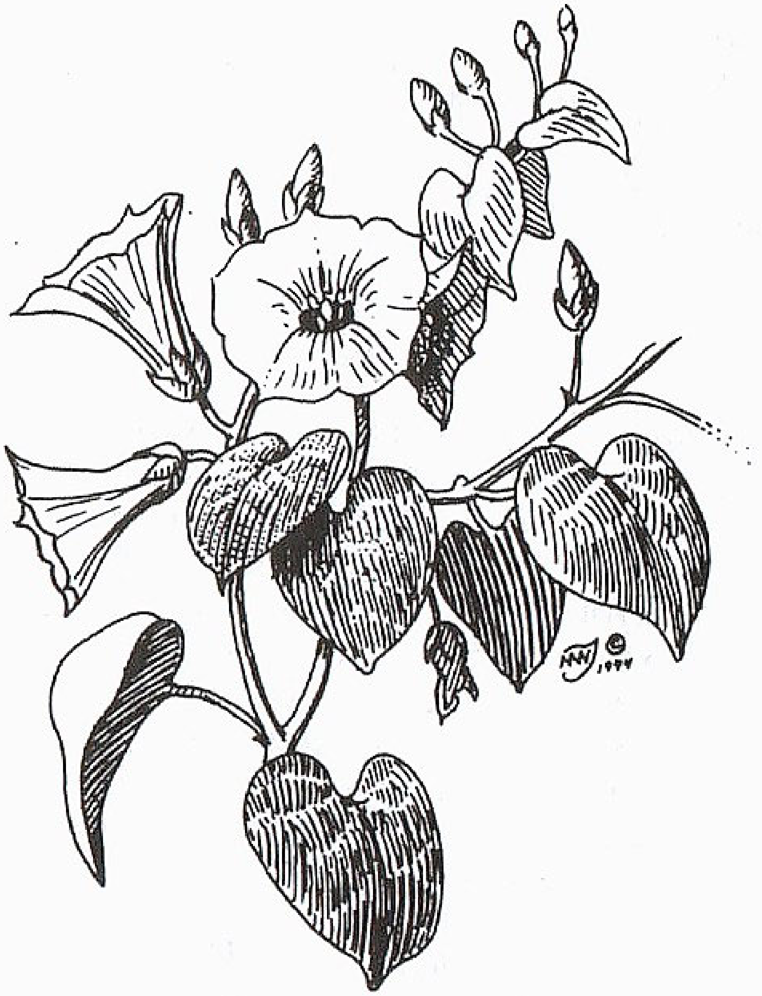


Figure 8-1
Rivea corymbosa, or "ololiuqui."

Ololiuqui, like the mushrooms and other magical plants, was more than just a means of communication with the supernatural. It was itself a divinity and the object of worship, reverently preserved within the secret household shrines of village shamans, curers, and even ordinary people in the early Colonial era. Carefully hidden in consecrated baskets and other dedicatory receptacles, the seeds were personally addressed with prayers, petitions, and incantations, and honored with sacrificial offerings, incense, and flowers. *Ololiuqui* was apparently considered to

be male. It could even manifest itself in human form to those that drank the sacred infusion.[2]

One of the chief officers of the Spanish Inquisition in Mexico was Ruiz de Alarcon, who has left a written account of his attempts to stamp out the use of *ololiuqui.* Because of this man's Anslinger-like zeal, the Indians were placed in an untenable dilemma on the issue — either they faced the archonic wrath of their inner god on the one hand, or the cruel and unusual punishments of their space/time Spanish overlords on the other:

The Indians, [Alarcon] complains, seemed always to find new ways to thwart even the best efforts of the clergy, including himself as the investigating emissary of the Holy Office, hiding their supplies of *ololiuqui* in secret places, not only because they were afraid of discovery and punishment by the Inquisition, but for fear that *ololiuqui* itself might punish them for having suffered it to be desecrated by the touch of alien hands. Always, he reports, the Indians seemed to be more concerned with the good will of *ololiuqui* than the displeasure and penalties of the clergy.... [He says]: "This is not the same fear which they have for the ministers of justice for the punishment they deserve, rather [it is] the fear that they have for this same *ololiuqui,* or the deity they believe resides in it, and in this respect they have their reverence so confused that it is necessary to have the help of God to remove it." [3]

Like many others called upon to "do God's work," Alarcon's writings recapitulate the eternally tedious tactics of the totalitarian mind. Huge bonfires were lit in the village squares and the *coaxi-huitl* vines along with their *ololiuqui* seeds were then consigned to the flames before the eyes of all assembled sinners:

With all of them watching, I had almost the totality of the said seed which I had collected burned, and I ordered burned and cleared again the kind of bushes where they are found.[4]

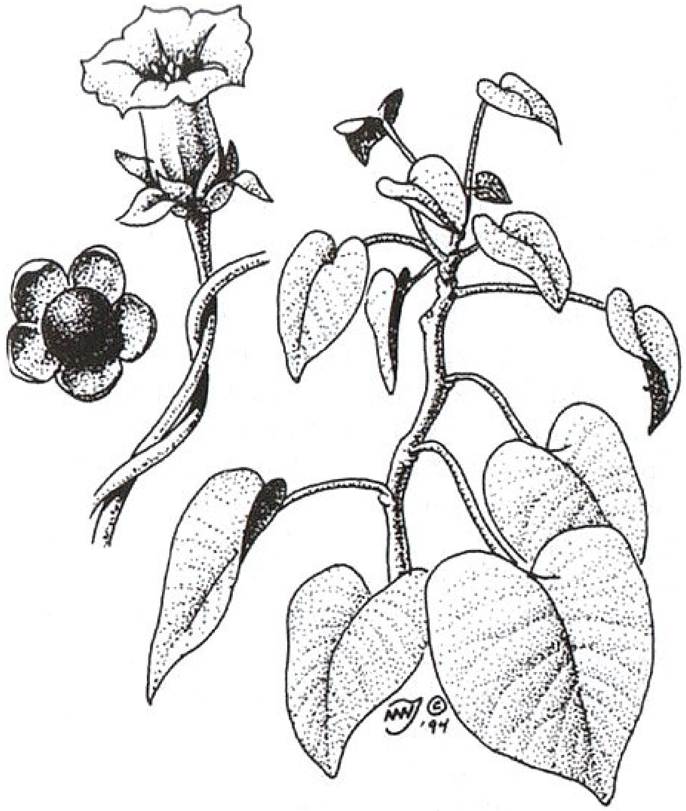


Figure 8-2 Argyreia Nervosa, or "Hawaiian Baby Woodrose."

It probably didn't take more than one demon-stration of this sort to drive the ingestion of *ololiuqui* underground. There it hid for over four hundred
ears until Harvard ethnobotanist R.E. Schultes
conclusively identified *ololiuqui* as the seed of the morning glory species: *Turbina* (also called *Rivea)*
corymbosa, and its apparently continuous use among the Indians of Oaxaca was rediscovered. It
would take almost another twenty years before
ololiuqui's psychoactive alkaloid, d-lysergic acid amide (ergine, or LA-111), would be identified by Albert Hofmann, the Swiss discoverer of LSD-25

(d-lysergic acid *diethyl-amide)*. This took place in 1960, the same year that the seeds of another morning glory species, *Ipotnoea violacea* (called *Badoh negro* by the Indians), were also found being ingested by Mexican curers. Although considered the more hallucinogenic of the two species, *Badoh negro* was used in much the same way that *ololiuqui* was.

By 1965, an additional convolvulaceous species, *Argyreia nervosa,* the Hawaiian Baby Woodrose, was discovered to be the most potent of this class of hallucinogens yet identified, with lysergic acid amide concentrations up to three times that of the others. Interestingly enough, this Woodrose species (originally a native of India) has no known history of shamanic usage.

Probably none of these discoveries would have meant much to anyone except ethnobotanists and anthropologists, had they not happened to coincide with the beginning of the worldwide psychedelic revolution of the 1960s. Consequently, it didn't take long before Westerners began to experiment with the psychotropic effects of morning glory seeds. Much of the initial interest in these hallucinogens was undoubtedly prompted by the fact that morning glories weren't illegal — the Inquisition probably wouldn't bash your door down just because you had a few Heavenly Blues twining around the porch trellis. That assurance has now become mildly uncertain, however, and the precise legal status of morning glory seeds, if not currently a pressing concern of law enforcement, remains ambivalent to this day:

The abuse of the hallucinogenic employment of convolvulaceous seeds became so serious at one time that law enforcement agencies in Europe and the United States were forced to take steps towards controlling their non-horticultural use.[5]

To the best of my knowledge, morning glories have yet to be declared illegal, but since their seeds do contain a controlled substance, it is apparently against the law to eat them. (As a matter of fact, in addition to the seeds, the leaves and stems of many morning glory species also contain lysergic acid amides.) In other words, it's OK to grow the plant, but if you swallow any of it, you're in potential trouble

— a surreal sort of statute that I've never heard of being enforced.

The Inquisition lives on, however. Because of an ostensible anxiety that millions of Americans might become morning glory junkies, seed companies (apparently under duress from the DEA) are alleged to discourage ingestion by coating their product with a noxious emetic. True or not, the fact is that ingesting any species of morning glory seeds, chemically coated or not, is likely to make you ill enough to think twice before you repeat the experience. The literature is full of such observations, the following of which is typical:

> The cramping, nausea and frequent diarrhea that accompany use of these seeds gave rise to a street belief that they either contained strychnine naturally, or were coated with poison by seed companies to discourage ingestion. The general feeling among users is that the trip is not worth the side effects. Given the low potency of the seeds, physical distress is much more probable than psychological disruption... High doses can be dangerous and should be strictly avoided. Nausea and abdominal distress apparently go with the territory.[6]

It is axiomatic that nausea is an almost certain side effect of ingesting morning glory seeds. Therefore a simple extraction formula to separate the lysergic acid amides from their accompanying toxins would be a useful thing to know. Unfortunately, to date, I have been unable to discover any formula that works (for me) as advertised, despite trying several impressively complicated recipes published in the underground press during the sixties and seventies. Because the lysergic acid amides in morning glory seeds are apparently present in the form of a water-soluble salt, chemical extraction by nonchemists may be a waste of time. A simple water-extraction (essentially identical to that used by native curers in Mexico), while often productive of nausea, still seems to be the most consistently effective form of ingestion. Many of the reports of severe nausea and vomiting seem to involve actual ingestion of the *seeds,* rather than of the "tea" created by soaking them in water.

Nevertheless, my research on morning glory seeds is distinguished by the fact that, aside from the typical nausea, everyone seems to have a

different reaction to them.

I prepare morning glory seeds by crushing them, soaking in cold water for 6 to 8 hours, scraping off and discarding the film that collects on the top of the water, and then straining the liquid and seed mash through cotton fabric. The most noticeable negative side effects with the 100-250 seed dose were mild nausea and stomach pain. The positive effects were relaxation, lucidity, and a magical tranquil state. After a 500 seed dose I became very sick (nausea and vomiting). The intense nausea drowned out any psychedelic effects except for some mild color visuals. Needless to say it was not an experience that I'd like to repeat. I have also used Hawaiian Baby Woodrose seeds. These were prepared by soaking and scraping the seed coats (which are supposed to be toxic). The first time I ate six seeds and had an enjoyable, magical, dreamy experience. The second time I ate eight unsoaked, unscraped seeds and experienced a lot of nausea and inability to sleep. The third time I ate 12 prepared seeds and experienced a drunk feeling with nausea and then vomiting, after which I felt much better and had some behind the eyelids visuals (mostly dull orange, red, yellow and brown patterns). I stayed up the remainder of the night having enjoyable conversations with friends. The next morning I continued to feel very peaceful and in a good mood. It is probable that the alkaloids vary from plant to plant and that the growing conditions and post-harvest age also contribute to the seeds' potency. Some friends have had nothing but negative physical effects from Hawaiian Baby Woodrose, but another friend has used morning glories with little or no side effects. He soaks the seeds until the seed coat comes off easily and then eats the inner pre-sprout. I have not yet tried this technique. I have also tried *Rivea corymbosa — Ololiuqui* seeds that a friend grew in Hawaii. The maximum number ingested was 70: I thoroughly chewed and swallowed them. The effects were a peaceful, lethargic relaxation. I sense that the *Ololiuqui* spirit is very benevolent, magical and tranquil, so I'd like to experiment more with this entheogen.[7]

Nothing from the above description resembles the typical effects of LSD. Although the following account sounds somewhat more

"psychedelic," it still hardly matches the ecstatic accounts of the early LSD explorers:

I have used [morning glory seeds] twice, both times harvesting the seeds myself (thus avoiding any chemical treatment of packaged seeds). I followed the procedure given by Richard Alan Miller in *The Magical and Ritual Use of Herbs,* grinding the seeds into a meal, soaking them for one hour in water, then blending with milk (the first time) or juice (second try) and drinking it down. The first time I took 200 seeds. I became very agitated and "edgy," but after eating a little rice settled down into a pleasant, mild psychedelic state which lasted a couple of hours. At no time did I feel any nausea.

The second experience was with 300 seeds, my husband taking the same dose. This time, following Miller's suggestion, we took Drama-mine after ingesting the seeds to prevent possible nausea. This experience was extremely intense, lasting about six hours. "LSD-like" is not completely accurate. This had a darker quality, with strong auditory hallucinations. Neither one of us spoke during the trip, the feeling was of being forcefully told to "go inside and stay there." With eyes closed, not moving, I felt less like a participant than a listener/observer. During the peak I felt no nausea, but as I was coming down I had to get up to vomit. My husband felt no nausea, but the rest of his experience qualitatively matched mine. In these two instances the seeds were */. tricolor* (*/. violacea)* — Heavenly Blue variety.[8]

Although morning glory seeds contain a substance closely related to LSD-25 — the archetype par excellence for a "psychedelic" drug in Western culture — there is a significant contrast between the subjective effects of the amide versus the diethylamide form of the molecule.

...There is not only a quantitative difference between the principles of *lpomoea violacea* and *Turbina corymbosa* and LSD; there is likewise a qualitative one, LSD being a very specific hallucinogen, whereas the psychic effects of lysergic acid amide and *the total alkaloids of these*

two plants are characterized by a pronounced narcotic component. (Emphasis mine)[9]

Knowing that the seeds have a strong sedative component, the question becomes: how many of them are necessary to attain a reasonably *psychedelic* state of consciousness? Correspondents have described a wide range of dosages for morning glory seeds. Here is a formula from the high end of the scale:

1. 2 oz. Heavenly Blues ground in a blender.
2. Soak in water for three days. Shake it every day.
3. Strain through coffee filter.
4. Drink only the liquid.

Comes on in about half an hour. Thinking is very "trippy," visuals don't really get started for about two and a half hours. A slightly demanding experience, but worth trying.[10]

Three hundred is generally considered to be a high dose of morning glory seeds, and granted that we are all different in our psychological and physical make-ups, what may be a "slightly demanding experience" for one person may be a hellish bummer for someone else. Additionally, material from different plants is likely to vary in both weight and potency, depending on growing conditions and other factors. If we establish that a 300 seed dose weighs between 6 and 8 grams, the two ounce dose of the above formula (approx. 56 grams) would contain more than two thousand seeds! To give a feeling for what a trip like that might be like, here is a partial description of one man's experience with only half that number. In this instance there is no doubt at all that the effects were "psychedelic":

My own experience with morning glory seeds can serve to indicate the tremendous power of these seeds as an hallucinogenic agent. It turned out to be a bad trip, done in a poor set, with no clear purpose or expectation in mind, other than to have a high time. It was a trip from which it took about two years to recover mental confidence in psychedelics. The ill outcome was, of course, due to the reckless

indulgence in an enormous overdose for which I was totally unprepared.... I recall calculating that I had between 1000 and 1200 seeds. I had read that about 300 seeds are sufficient, but I figured that was probably a minimal dose; I might as well make sure of getting off really good.... I saw coming toward me very rapidly, increasing in size, what I can only refer to as "the spinner." This was beyond anything I had ever experienced before... Two or three times it approached, nearly filling the room, and I became really frightened then, fearful of dying. There was no escaping it; that center of rotation was the center of my own visual field, my own axis of rotation. With a terrible infinite energy it alternated its direction of spin; as it approached, I could feel myself melting into it, being absorbed; drained of identity and consciousness, a goner forever.... Two great rivers of fiery red and brilliant green split my mind and I began to learn the dichotomy of mind/brain as only one expression of a perfectly dichotomous universe, from electron/proton to the bi-lobed cerebrum which generated my own conscious thought: All is split; eternally as divided as heaven and hell. Now very much alarmed, I demanded my wife take me to the hospital...[11]

One of the most interesting aspects of the psychedelic experience is the extremely wide range of individual reactions to these substances. One person describes a two thousand seed trip as "slightly demanding, but worth it," while another winds up in the emergency room on half that dose. We are dealing with psychoactive molecules interfacing with the brain synapses of a unique individual psyche, hence, at bottom, psychedelics are just novel ways of experiencing ourselves. Since each of us is unique, each experience is also: Aldous Huxley takes LSD and attains to a particular knowledge; Charles Manson does the same, but receives something quite different.

The ingestion of morning glory seeds to alter consciousness has been practiced in contemporary Western contexts for less than forty years, in sharp contrast to their employment for that purpose by indigenous cultures for millennia. Chemical analysis has shown that Hawaiian Baby Woodrose seeds {*Argyreia nervosa)* contain significantly more hallucinogenic alkaloids than the seeds of either Heavenly Blue *(Ipomoea*

violacea), or the classical *ololiuqui (Turbina corymbosa).* In quantitative terms, a hierarchy of relative potency has been clearly established, with *ololiuqui* occupying the very bottom of the list.

Nevertheless, indigenous ritual use indicates dose levels for T. *corymbosa,* and *I. violacea* which are far lower than that perceived as necessary to effect hallucinosis in members of modern Western cultures. In Mexico, the only place in the world where the ingestion of morning glory seeds has an established tradition of shamanic usage, a hallucinogenic dose is said to be only thirteen seeds, a ritual amount based on religious numerology rather than chemical analysis.

To further confuse the issue, despite the higher concentration of alkaloids in the Woodrose seeds, the trip is generally experienced by Westerners as both somatically unpleasant and not particularly psychedelic. In glaring contrast, Mexican shamans routinely ingest (to us) subthreshold doses of a much less potent species to encounter full-blown allies from the imaginal realm who aid them in their diagnoses. What accounts for the discrepancy?

Assuming good will and a desire for accuracy on the part of all informants, one can only speculate on the significant disparities separating the reports of Indians from Westerners. Perhaps the first notable difference is that the Indians use their drugs ritually in a religious and healing context, whereas Westerners are generally recreationally or scientifically oriented. Perhaps there is some relationship between religious belief, per se, and concepts relating to homeopathic medicine which make the use of only thirteen seeds effective in an indigenous context and not in Western settings. Then there is the fact that the genetic make-up, as well as the growing and harvesting conditions associated with each plant, often result in wide variances in potency, considerations which apply to every species discussed in this book.

The presence of so many anomalies in the literature and folklore of psychedelia favors an alchemical interpretation, that is to say, the consciousness we seek to alter is *at least* as important as the substance we use to alter it with. The same key may open many different doors, but what might lie behind each portal will remain indeterminate until entered. There are valid reasons for Western medicine's preference for

refined chemical compounds — their effects are generally unambiguous, an important consideration for any society conditioned to expect the uniformly repeatable results of the assembly line.

Figure 8-3
Ipomoea violacea. "Morningglories" conic in many varieties, including "Heavenly Blue" (shown), "Flying Saucers," "Pearly Gates"'and "Wedding Bells."

The shamanic-alchemical model, on the other hand, demands a deeper, more deliberate sort of atnention, less forcible, certainly, but also more thorough and holistic. Hence, alchemy: the focused union of consciousness with matter; an operation encompassing the *unus mundus* and requiring a personal covenant between the consumer and the substance consumed. This implies having a dynamic ongoing relationship with the plants one ingests, from planting their seeds,

through the growing cycle, to harvest and preparation for use. If done with love and intent, this is a magical and consciousness-expanding experience in itself.

Morning glories are beautiful plants, and quite worthwhile to get to know even if one doesn't eat their seeds. *Ipomoea violacea,* a species sometimes referred to as *Ipomoea tricolor* (the classification of morning glories is quite confusing and even botanists bicker about which is which), contains several varieties. Heavenly Blue is probably the most familiar, but Flying Saucers, Pearly Gates and Wedding Bells are also included. Although often not as easy to find as most other flower seeds, they are still obtainable in the springtime from most nurseries, and are totally simple to grow.

Although this species is a perennial it is usu-ally cultivated as an annual in this country. Morning glories thrive in a strong, well-drained soil in a sunny site with plenty of water, but they will do well almost anywhere. The seeds have a hard seedcoat and should be nicked or soaked 2 hours in warm water before sowing. If the seeds are nicked and soaked, the vines will generally flower 6 weeks after sowing. The seeds should be planted 1/4 - 1/2 inch deep and not less than 6 inches apart. This species tends to run to vine unless the roots are cramped. This may be done by standing the vines in pots and allowing them to become slightly potbound be-fore setting them out. Although morning glories like a lot of water, if the roots are kept damp constantly, the vines will produce few flowers and they will set very little seed.[12]

Turbina con/mbosa, or *ololiuqui,* the classical morning glory entheogen of Mexico, is fairly rare in the U.S., although seeds may be purchased from various specialty growers at premium prices (1993: fifty-cents apiece). My experience: out of twenty seeds planted, only one came up, and that a very sickly sprout indeed. By constant babying, how-ever, I did manage to get it to grow into a healthy mature plant, which is now happily twining around the rafters of my greenhouse. Through its second season, it has yet to flower. Because of its rarity and seemingly fragile nature, I maintain it as a potted perennial greenhouse plant, while the less scarce *Ipomoea violaceas* are allowed to flower and

die as annual vines outside. (They produce enough seed so that they are prolific self-sowers, and each Spring many vines return with force and vigor.) *Ololiuqui* grows well for me as a greenhouse plant with no special care to differentiate it from that of I *violacea.*

The Hawaiian Baby Woodrose, *Argyreia nervosa,* is very much a tropical plant, and although I keep two specimens in my greenhouse, they definitely require higher nighttime temperatures than I'm able to maintain. It is doubtful whether they would really thrive in any environment less than a continuous 70 F. I don't expect them to flower here, though my second year plants are now showing significantly more growth than last year, and are quite healthy, if rather small for their age.

SLEEPY GRASS *(Stipa robusta)*

Sleepy grass *(Stipa robusta)* is a coarse perennial range grass which is native to Colorado, New Mexico, Texas and Arizona. It has an infamous reputation in this section of the country because of its effect on livestock, particularly horses:

Expeditions depending on horses for transportation in the early days often had great difficulty traveling through these areas of New Mexico because their horses ate the grass readily and moderate amounts of it produce profound, nearly stuporous sleep. The condition lasts several days, during which it is impossible to rouse the animals more than momentarily. A poisonous principle capable of producing such deep sleep of animals might have great medical value, but attempts by pharmaceutical companies to extract an effective compound have been unsuccessful.[13]

The active principle in sleepy grass has been identified at last, in the December, 1992 issue of *Discover* magazine a recent study is mentioned in which *Stipa robusta* has been found to contain D-ly-sergic acid amide. Interestingly, the alkaloid is actually produced by *Acremonium*, a symbiotic fungu living within the plant's tissues. So closely have the two

organisms evolved together that the fungus is now integral with the plant's seeds, thus ensuring that the symbiosis is automatically continued each generation. The article claims that sleepy grass has the highest known concentration of lysergic acid amide of any known plant species.

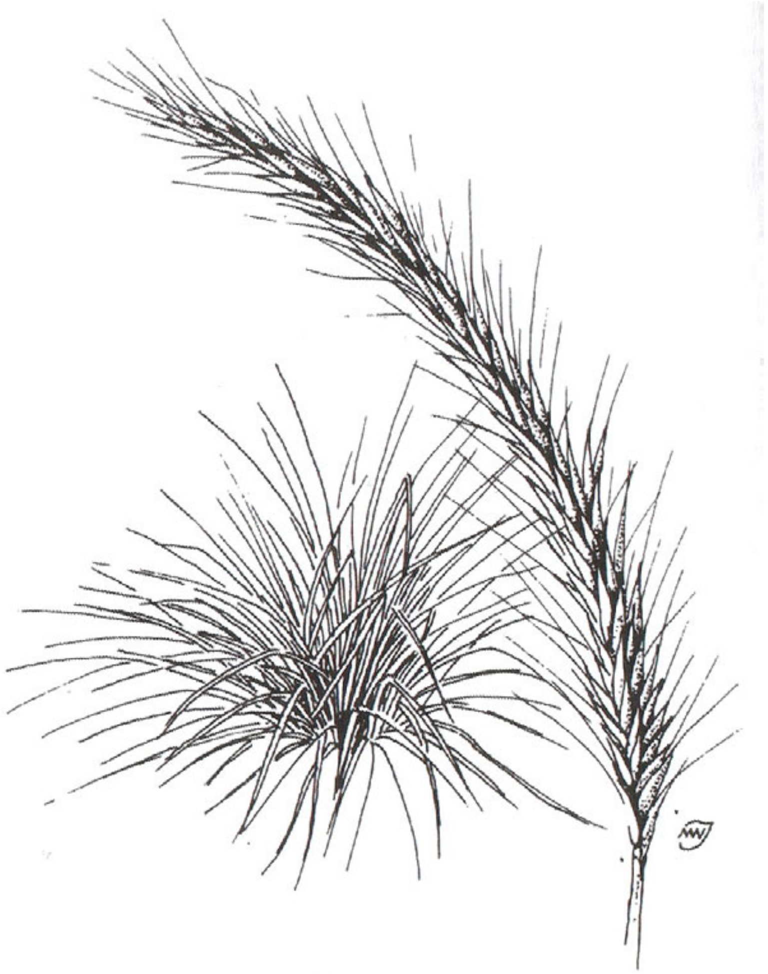


Figure 8-4
Stipa robusta, or "sleepy grass."

This information is all so new that the following letter from a correspondent is the only guidance I have about *S.*

robusta's potential as a hallucinogenic agent:

Stipa robusta seeds are tiny, black, long and thin — kind of a smaller version of wild rice seed. I recently planted eight seeds, which all came up in my starter trays within a week.

I ate one seed, but with no observable results. I later increased the dosage to nine seeds, chewing them thoroughly with my front teeth. They are so small they have a tendency to get away from me while attempting to chew them up.

After an hour, a discernible shift in my nervous system began taking place. At about an hour and a half, there was a slight stimulation effect and "feelings of unreality of the outside world" to partially quote Albert Hofman's description of his experience with pure lysergic acid amides in *The Ethnobotany and Chemistry of Hallucinogens.*

I turned out the lights, went to bed and listened to a meditation tape with headphones. Colorless, subtly shifting hallucinations of emotionally-laden, complex patterns became easily seen in the darkness. There was absolutely no exhaustion or nausea as one would expect from Hawaiian Baby Woodrose *(Argyria nervosa)* seeds. In fact, the experience was qualitatively very different from Woodrose. I have no literature on *S. robusta,* but I am guessing that the effects were mostly lysergic acid amide, with few or no other alkaloids. Physically, the experience was very calm and pleasant though sometimes a little weird. Some 20 or 30 minutes after lying down, I drifted off to sleep. The taped meditation sounds definitely helped activate and focus both the visual and emotional content of the experience. All in all, it was intriguing and worthwhile, and next time I will try 20 seeds. There were no apparent after-effects or hangover the next morning. Sleepy grass seeds are definitely an entheogen worth exploring.[14]

It goes without saying that one should be extremely cautious when experimenting with any new plant species. Although the *Discover* article mentions that Central American Indians give these seeds as a sedative to crying infants, I am unaware of any indigenous tradition which utilizes

them for evoking shamanic states of consciousness. Since the range of the plant is restricted to the American Southwest, how "Central American Indians" obtain the seeds remains an unanswered question. (These claims in the popular press are always suspect — an essential part of the psychedelic mythmaking archetype which appears to be the only model by which our culture is able to process such information.)

It is important to remember that the ergot fungus species *Claviceps purpurea* was the source of Albert Hofmann's original discovery of LSD. This fungus, which grows on ryegrass, contains as many as thirty separate alkaloids, some of which are responsible for ergotism, a disease which over the centuries has killed many thousands of people worldwide:

> The ergot alkaloids are derivatives of lysergic acid and the hallucinogenic D-lysergic acid amide. The chief effects of these alkaloids are gangrenous and convulsive. In gangrenous ergotism the fingers start to tingle, vomiting and diarrhea follow, and within a few days gangrene appears in the toes and fingers. Entire limbs are affected, and amid excruciating pain as circulation is decreased, they separate from the body.... The convulsive form starts the same way but is followed by painful spasms of the limb muscles, culminating in epileptic-like convulsions. Known as St. Anthony's fire, it was a dreaded disease wherever infected rye bread was eaten.[15]

Anyone seeing the photograph of a "Gangrenous leg of ergotism" on page 417 of *Medical Botany* (see footnote 15), would look elsewhere for a hallucinogen, or at least be inspired to investigate extraction of the lysergic acid amides rather than eat anything containing the fungus. *Acremonium* (and by extension sleepy grass) may or may not contain these or similar alkaloids, but it behooves us to exercise extreme caution whenever experimenting with a new species. Since I've never heard of ergotism being a problem with the ingestion of morning glory infusions, it is reasonable to assume that the dangerous alkaloids don't *always* accompany the hallucinogenic ones.

Notes

1. Schultes, R. & Hofmann, A. (1979). *Plants of the Gods,* McGraw-Hill (UK), Maidenhead, England, p. 163.
2. Furst, P. (1976). *Hallucinogens and Culture,* Chandler and Sharp, Novato, CA, p. 67.
3. *Ibid.,* pp. 68-69.
4. *Ibid.,* p. 69.
5. Schultes, R.E. (1969). "The New World Indians and Their Hallucinogenic Plants," *7th Annual Lecture Honoring Dr. Laura L. Barnes, Nov. 12, 1969.*
6. Smith, D., M.D. (1985). "Abuse Folio Med Alert," *High Times Magazine,* March, 1985, p. 30.
7. Anonymous 1 (1992), personal communication.
8. Anonymous 2 (1992), personal communication.
9. Schultes, R.E. & Hofmann, A. (1973). *The Botany and Chemistry of Hallucinogens,* Chas. Thomas, Springfield, IL, p. 252.
10. Anonymous 3 (1992), personal communication.
11. Smith, E. (1983). *"Ololiuqui* and *Badah* [sic] *Negro:* Nature's Cousins to LSD," *The Psychozoic Press,* #3, Spring, p. 50, *passim.*
12. Grubber, H. (1973). *Growing the Hallucinogens,* 20th Century Alchemist, P.O. Box 3684, Manhattan Beach, CA 90266, p. 50.
13. Kingsbury, J. M. (date?). *Deadly Harvest — a Guide to Common Poisonous Plants,* Holt, Rine-hart and Winston, NY, p. 58.
14. Anonymous 4 (1993). Personal communication.
15. Lewis, W.H. & Elvin-Lewis, M.P.F. (1977). *Medical Botany,* Wiley-Interscience, NY, p. 416.

Chapter Nine
mescaline: peyote and san pedro

Through San Pedro the *curandero* can control out of space and time events: he can transform himself into a bird or puma or travel onward or backward into time or other places, can find out places or persons far away or discover the author of thefts or murders.... He can do this in force of his magical pact *(compacto)* with the positive or [benign] entities. We must underline that according to the indigenous conception of the world, the powers or entities are not exclusively positive or negative: the mythical world is ambiguous and ambivalent. A spirit can be good *(bueno)* like a healer or a protector, or bad according to the relationship established with him by the operator or according to the purpose of the ritual action.[1]

At least a thousand years before the birth of Christ, North American aborigines living in what is now Texas, were ritually using the peyote cactus *(Lophophora williamsii)* as a catalyst to enter the imaginal realms. At about the same time in South America, Peruvian Indians began ingesting the San Pedro cactus *(Trichocereus pachanoi)* for the same purpose. Although these two species of cacti could hardly be more different in structure and appearance, they both contain the same psychoactive alkaloid, mescaline. It is interesting, perhaps even significant, that such dissimilar

and widely separated cultures should begin using the same chemical molecule for the same purpose at approximately the same time in history.

European contact with this molecule didn't occur until more than 2,500 years later, when the Spanish Inquisition reacted with characteristic savagery to anyone who dared to break their laws by eating it:

A great many Indians were flogged and sometimes killed when they persisted in using it... [One man's] eyeballs were said to be gouged out after three days of torture; "then the Spaniards cut a crucifix pattern in his belly and turned ravenous dogs loose on his innards."[2]

This level of response to the ingestion of peyote in Mexico and San Pedro in Peru effectively drove the use of both species underground for hundreds of years. Not until the last decades of the 19th Century was European interest in the effects of mescaline rekindled. Indeed, the alkaloid wasn't even isolated and named until 1897, a bare 96 years before the time of this writing.

As is characteristic of most lore relating to psychedelic substances, there is an aura of fantastic inaccuracy surrounding mescaline. The name itself emerged from confusion surrounding the *Mescalew* Apache (the tribe from whom the original extraction samples were obtained), the *Mescal plant (Maguey)* used in the fermentation of tequila, and the *Mescal bean (Sophora secundiflora)*, a hallucinogen used before the discovery of peyote, and so toxic that death from its ingestion is as likely as hallucinosis. (Of all the various plants currently eaten for their psychedelic effects, I have yet to encounter a single reference to modern use of the Mescal bean for that purpose.) Nevertheless, "mescaline" was the appellation bestowed upon peyote's most psychoactive alkaloid, despite the fact that it has nothing remotely in common with any of its "mescal" namesakes.

Modern awareness of mescaline didn't begin percolating into the mass imagination until around 1954,following the publication of Aldous Huxley's now famous description of his psychedelic experiences, *The Doors of Perception*. This book made a great impression on the

intelligensia of the time, and helped set the stage for the drug revolution of the next decade. It wasn't long before increasing numbers of people began proselytizing about the effects of mescaline and, with predictable consequences, the media quickly translated these reports into shocking tales of terror and debauchery. The upshot was that by the end of the Sixties the Inquisition had declared all forms of mescaline illegal for ingestion by anyone except ethnic members of the peyote-based Native American Church (NAC). This strange and constitutionally questionable exception constitutes the only legal authorization for the religious use of a psychedelic substance in the United States today.

Not that the privilege is a particularly comfortable one; NAC members have been fighting a more or less continuous battle to keep their sacrament safe from seizure by state-level drug enforcement agencies for as long as the church has been in existence. To date, with the exception of a few legal *non sequiturs*, the courts have more or less upheld the NAC's right to eat peyote in their religious ceremonies, a situation which may soon be irrelevant, since the cactus is rapidly becoming extinct from overharvesting, and has already been declared an endangered species in Mexico, its primary habitat.

Peyote was placed on the Mexican government's endangered species list at the end of 1991. Initially, it appeared that it would be illegal for Mexican Indians to collect peyote for their traditional religious ceremonies. This situation was corrected by an amendment to the Mexican constitution which gave indigenous citizens the right to use peyote for religious purposes.[3]

This, it seems to me, is like making it illegal to harvest tomatoes, except for food purposes. Anyone who examines the issues involved here for even a minute will realize that, like almost everything involving substances that alter consciousness, this subject is entangled in gross contradictions, ludicrous paradoxes and mind-warping absurdities. One of our planet's most potent psychedelics, declared illegal for ingestion by any except certain racial/cultural groups, but widely used anyway by "illegal" categories of people, has been overcollected to the point of

extinction. In some quarters this must seem like a convenient solution to a law-enforcement "problem," in others, an inconceivable loss to the human experience, and in still others, the elimination of just one more DNA molecule for no apparent purpose other than the free exercise of our right to be ecologically irresponsible.

Peyote's native environment is restricted to the Chihuahuan desert, a region extending from the South Texas frontier into North Central Mexico. Never overabundant even in its natural habitat, it takes about thirteen years for a peyote cactus to attain a diameter of four inches.

To get an image of the volume being consumed, consider that the Native American Church claims a quarter-million members; now imagine each member eating a minimum dose of four peyote buttons at each weekly meeting. (A low figure, since a psychoactive dose is usually six dried buttons" — each unit representing the above-ground portion of one peyote cactus plant.) It doesn't take a math wizard to calculate that upwards of a million buttons might be consumed each week — perhaps fifty-two million buttons a year! These figures do not take into account any harvesting by Mexican tribes or by non-Indians, so it is obvious that peyote is a nonrenewable resource at present rates of consumption.

Peyote used to be relatively common across Southern Texas, but, over the past decade, collectors, dopers, Indians, and narcs have nearly exterminated the plant on both sides of the border.... Peyote, like many forms of rare cactus, is painfully slow growing. A mature, baseball sized plant can be thirty years old... I am convinced that if this mythical and potentially valuable medical plant is to survive, it will be with the help of conservationists.[4]

I confess that I've never enjoyed eating peyote; its flavor has always seemed to me the undisputed model for the worst tasting thing in the world, a substance that a curious preadolescent deity might dream up if he wanted to test to what extremes poor, benighted humanity would go to transcend
its natural condition. One summer night in the early eighties I ate about half a dozen dried peyote buttons. I no longer remember how I ingested

them — probably ground them up and put them in gela-tin capsules. The point is that I became as miserably sick as I can ever remember being. Long after my stomach was empty, I had several hours of the psychedelic dry heaves." The amount of energy expended during each of these purges was awe-some — as if I was puking up my life force. The spasms came in spaced, inexorable waves, and felt like a cosmic hand was squeezing me out like an old toothpaste tube. As the rhythm of it continued and I grew weaker and more helpless, I actually began to fear that I might be dying! There was nothing spiritual, nothing profound or insightful gained from this experience except the resolute conviction that it would be my last peyote trip. I apologized to my body, and remorsefully promised that I would never subject it to that kind of abuse again.

Most peyotists obviously do not share this feeling. Some have told me that my reaction to the plant is just an indicator of how far I have to go to reach spiritual integration. (It is a common NAC tenet that the degree of sickness experienced from peyote ingestion is an index of one's need for purification. There may be something to it — I know longtime NAC members who munch dried peyote buttons like they were potato chips.) Be that as it may, author /scientist Robert DeRopp, a drug researcher with far better credentials than mine, has remarked that peyote "is about as unpromising a passport to an artificial paradise as can be imagined."[5]

All of which becomes academic if the cactus is harvested into extinction. Obviously, this is one species with serious survival problems which make it impractical, if not immoral, to continue using.

Fortunately, the mescaline-containing San Pedro cactus *(Trichocereus pachanoi),* a native of Peru (and currently legal to possess in the United States), is in no danger of extinction. Named after St. Peter, "guardian of the threshold" for the Catholic Paradise (an apparent strategy of the Indians to placate the Inquisition), San Pedro has always been associated with complex ritual usage among shamans in South America.

The Peruvian folk-healers ("curanderos") know the San Pedro properties from their ancestors and use it in their ritual ceremonies. They and the attendants drink an extract of the sliced stems of the cactus boiled in

water for several hours. Sometimes they add other plants, like Datura, separately boiled. This beverage has the hallucinogenic agent and the curandero,by songs, asks the cactus to let him see the illness of the patient and the herbs necessary for the treatment. It is also used for divination and to counteract sorcery.... Clinically, after unpleasant symptoms (nausea, vomiting and cramps) the psychiatric ones take place with liability of mood and alteration of perceptions, especially visual hallucinations associated with other senses' hallucinations. Then disorganization of time and space occurs.[6]

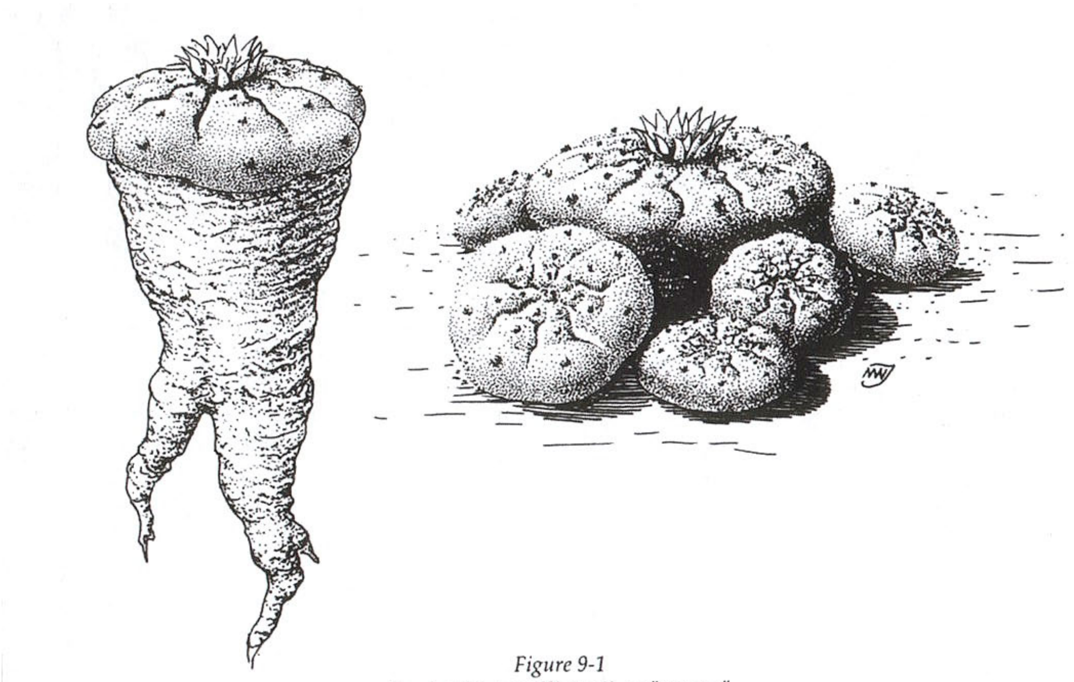


Figure 9-1
Lophophora williamsii, or "peyote."

Unlike peyote, once it is has passed the seed lingstage San Pedro is extremely fast growing.Specimens in my greenhouse have gained almost eighteen inches in one year. It is also uncommonly easy to cultivate, and will thrive almost anyplace where the winters are relatively mild. I am told that it is quite common in gardens throughout Southern California. Cuttings of this almost spineless cactus are available from specialty plant outlets, and even local nurseries are known to sell rooted specimens occasionally.

Cuttings are a much faster and easier way to begin with San Pedro

than seeds. (Seeds that I planted almost two years ago are still only minuscule cacti, less than an inch tall. It will be many more years before these plants commence the phenomenal growth associated with mature specimens.) The following instructions from a supplier sum up what you need to know about getting started with San Pedro cuttings:

Check the cut end of your cactus for signs of mold. If there's any soft, wet or furry spots, recut 1/2" or so. The fresh cut must callous over again before planting, so sun-dry the exposed surface a few days until tough. Beware during cool, humid weather. The cuttings can be kept for several weeks before planting.

Plant 3 to 4 inches deep in moistened, loose, fertile soil, tamp around the base so it stands firmly up. San Pedro will root rapidly if the soil is warm, but once growing they tolerate a broad range of climates from the desert to light frosts. Less light makes them grow slender. Disregard most general cactus-growing advice and treat San Pedro with the knowledge that it can and will grow very fast. Use the kind of soil mix and fertility you'd grow primo herb plants in. They do best under diffuse bright light, like in the greenhouse, where they will produce 12 to 18 inches per year, which on San Pedros is growth that you can practically watch happening.

Cuttings can be taken from any rooted plant, but make the cut on a slight angle to be sure water won't collect on the stump. Plants can be cut back to just a couple inches of stump and will regrow. A branch can be sectioned up into several propagative pieces, better to keep them at least 4 inches. Plant them upright when callous is dry, or half-buried on their side, which usually makes more buds pop. It doesn't matter if both ends are callouses, branches sprout from the corners of the cross-section.

Remember that San Pedro's main problem is rot. This usually is from damage, fresh cuts, accidental pokes, or too wet soil when it is cool. If you see one rotting, don't wait: take a clean knife and cut above the mushy area. Keep slicing 1/2 inch off until the cross-section has no off-color. Dry the exposed cut in sun or in dry air for a few days, until

tough. Cuttings and tender specimens can sunburn if the sides are suddenly left in glaring sun, they get shriveled scars along the side which blister and dry, but will still continue to grow.[7]

One creative solution to the slowgrowing peyote problem is to graft the top of a peyote plant to a nature column of San Pedro. Although I have not tried this myself, a correspondent describes the technique:

Since peyote grows so slowly, one can quadruple the growth rate by splicing a button to a similar diameter limb of a *T. pachanoi* or any other *Trichocereus.* This is done by carefully cutting each surface perfectly flat and smooth before grafting them. Until the graft takes, the peyote button may be held to the surface of the *Trichocereus* by spreading multiple strings with small weights attached to them across the top of
the button. A light ring of petroleum jelly should be painted around the cut to prevent desiccation of the contacting surfaces.

In four years the button will be very large. It may then be cut off, re-rooted and returned to the soil. Sometimes you get new pups coming out the side of your original graft, thus forming double, sometimes triple heads. I once saw five buttons growing from one root.[8]

Although San Pedro contains only about one third as much mescaline as peyote, a closely related species, *Trichocereus peruvianus,* is said to match peyote's concentration of the alkaloid. Unfortunately, unlike its cousin, *T. peruvianus* is quite rare in the United States. I have yet to discover a source for it, and suspect that its legendary potency might be another psychedelic myth, else why is it so hard to obtain? (Legends thrive on untestable claims.) For all practical purposes, that leaves us with *T. pachanoi.*

As might be expected with a plant containing so little mescaline, one has to eat a whole lot of San Pedro to have a psychedelic experience. It is said that a section of cactus twelve inches long and three inches in diameter makes an effective dose. This has not been enough, in my experience, and I suspect that this is the reason why many people claim

that San Pedro doesn't affect them. In fact, reducing a cactus section that size in a blender results in something less than a quart of green mucous the exact consistency of (forgive me) snot.

Those looking for "good times with a legal high" will probably not enjoy having to eat so much of the bitter, slimy stuff. I don't think we will have to worry too much about San Pedro being put on the controlled substances list, as it would be very difficult to use as a substance of chronic abuse. Although extraction or concentration of alkaloids is possible by anyone with a knowledge of basic chemistry, it is a laborious and time-consuming process for the relatively low yield.[9]

Rather than the recommended 12" X 3" section of cactus, I have found that it is more accurate to base dosage on the weight of dried and pulverized material. The following table is a good point of departure for experimentation:

Lophophora williamsii — 27.0 grams dry weight to produce 300 mg mescaline.

Trichocereus peruvianus — 37.5 grams dry weight to produce 300 mg mescaline.

Trichocereus pachanoi — 100.0 grams dry weight to produce 300 mg mescaline.[10]

Three hundred milligrams (a fairly large portion compared with most other psychedelic molecules) is considered an appropriately hallucinogenic dose of pure mescaline for an average sized adult. According to the above comparison, to get that much mescaline from San Pedro, one requires 100 grams of dried material. This is easily obtained by freezing chunks of raw cactus, then thawing them, a process which breaks down the cell walls and makes it easy to reduce the mass to a pulp in an electric blender. This slimy mash is then spread out on sheets of plastic wrap and dried. What's left is easily crumbled into powder, weighed and stored in mason jars until ready for use.

One hundred grams is almost four ounces of dried cactus, and

although San Pedro isn't quite as noxious tasting as peyote, it isn't something many people relish for its flavor. Choking down more than three ounces of bitter powder is not pleasant. There are other possibilities.

In Peru, the shamans boil the sliced fresh cactus in a large tin of water for eight or more hours, after which they remove the solid material and continue boiling until the broth is reduced to individual teacup sized portions. That's the traditional method. One can duplicate this with dried powder in an electric crockpot, or make a spagyric tincture with ethyl alcohol. (See the chapter on extraction techniques for details of these procedures.)

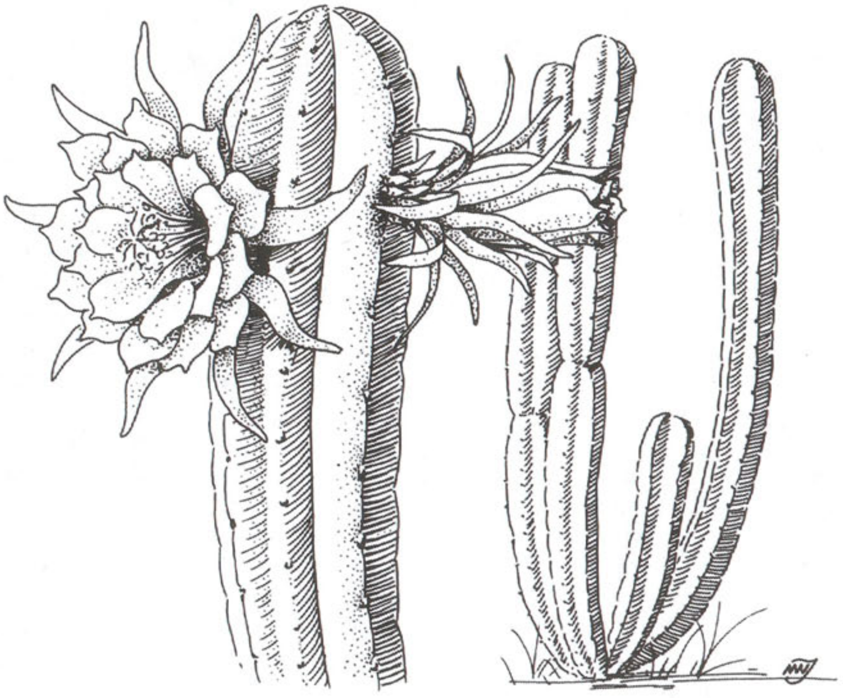


Figure 9-2
Trichocereus pachanoi, or "San Pedro." The cactus very rarely flowers when cultivated indoors.

My own experience with San Pedro has been relatively limited — frankly, mescaline doesn't interest me as much as it used to. Powder from an evaporated spagyric tincture weighing only eighteen grams (weight of the raw source material was unfortunately not recorded) was stirred into a package of lime Jell-O and allowed to set up in the refrigerator. The resulting gelatin was exceedingly bitter and unpleasant

to eat. Washing it down with tart lemonade helped considerably. In fact, it is easier to eliminate the Jell-O step entirely and just go with the lemonade.

The psychoactivity of this potion was what Alexander Shulgin calls a "Plus-2":

The effect of the drug is unmistakable, and not only can its duration be perceived, so can its nature. It's at this level that the first attempts at classification are made.... At a plus-2, I would drive a car only in a life-or-death situation. I can still answer the phone with ease, and handle the call competently, but I would much prefer not to have to do so. My cognitive faculties are still intact, and if something unexpected should arise, I would be able to suppress the drug's effects without much difficulty until the problem had been taken care of.[11]

The subjective effects of this San Pedro experiment were qualitatively different from a comparable peyote trip. Although there was mild nausea during the second hour, the psychoactive results were rather tranquil, as opposed to peyote's often electrical" or "speedy" symptoms. In addition to mescaline, more than fifty other alkaloids have been isolated from peyote, far more than are found in San Pedro, so some differences between the two experiences are to be expected.

My next experiment was to test the claim that 100 grams of dried San Pedro are equivalent to 27 grams of peyote, or 300 mg of pure mescaline. One hundred grams of dried San Pedro powder was accordingly boiled in one quart of water for 24 hours in a crockpot. This mixture was filtered through cheesecloth and then filtered again through a coffee filter. The resulting liquid was boiled in the crock-pot with the lid off until it was reduced in volume to about three fluid ounces. The result was a thin, dark syrup. This was swallowed in three shot glass increments which were immediately chased with very tart lemonade. The San Pedro concentrate was extremely bitter, but in my opinion not quite as awful as peyote. The lemonade helped immensely to chase the taste.

It came on very slowly — for a long time I thought nothing was going to happen. Nevertheless, somewhere into the third hour, I began to

realize that I was gradually entering Shulgin's Plus-three category:

This is the maximum intensity of drug effect. The full potential of the drug is realized. Its character can be fully appreciated (assuming that amnesia is not one of its properties) and it is possible to define the chronological pattern exactly.... I know what the nature of the drug's effects are on my body and mind. Answering the phone is out of the question, simply because it would require too much effort for me to maintain the required normalcy of voice and response. I would be able to handle an emergency, but suppression of the drug effects would require close concentration.[12]

Nausea and mild stomach cramps cycled in and out of the experience all night long; although these were uncomfortable, they were not overwhelming. There were very few of the colored patterns I have associated with past mescaline trips, but it did have a strong amphetamine quality to it, with a feeling of "electrical" energy surging through my body. The somatic effects were quite strong, though psychically I didn't feel I'd reached the threshold of the imaginal realm — there were no entities or voices. This trip lasted about ten hours, coming down as gradually as it went up. Subjectively, I felt it to be easily the equivalent of 300 mg of pure mescaline.

NOTES

1. Polia, M. & Bianchi, A. (1991). "Ethnological evidences and cultural patterns of the use of *Trichocereus pachanoi* B. R. among Peruvian curanderos," *integration No. 1,* Journal for mind-moving plants and culture, Bilwis-verlag d-8729 knetzgau/ eschenau.
2. Stafford, P. (1992). *Psychedelics Encyclopedia,* 3rd ed., Ronin Publishing, Berkeley, p. 104.
3. Stuart, R. (1992). "Peyote now legal for Huichol Indians," *The Sacred Record,* Willcox, AZ, February, p. 4.
4. Miller, R. (1988). "Homegrown Peyote," *High Times,* Sept. p. 37, *passim.*
5. Stafford, *op. cit.,* p. 133.
6. Ostolaza, C. (1984). "Trichocereus Pachanoi Br and R," *Cactus and Succulent Journal* (U.S.), Vol. 56.
7. Anonymous (c. 1990). "San Pedro cactus cutting care," *Of The Jungle,* P.O.

Box 1801, Sebastopol, CA 95473.
8. Anonymous (1993). Personal communication.
9. Smith, E.D. (1983). "San Pedro: Cactus of Gentle Strength," *The Psychozoic Press*, #4, Summer
10. Anonymous (1993). "A modest proposal," *The Entheogen Review*, Vol. 2, #2, Summer, p. 7.
11. Shulgin, A. and Shulgin, A. (1991). *Pihkal: A Chemical Love Story*, Transform Press, Berkeley, p. xiv.
12. *Ibid.*, p. xxv.

Chapter Ten

AYAHUASCA AND ITS *ANALOGUES: HARMINE AND DMT*

"What kind of visions do you have when you drink ayahuasca, don Julio?"

..."I see many things: boats, planes, people. Spirits. I talk with them, and they tell me things. Some of them are dead family members, or old friends. Some of them are the ancients, spirits I don't know. Some of them are good and some are evil. But they are only spirits... If you get afraid, you must remember that. They are only spirits."[1]

The Amazonian rain forest: planet earth's foremost ecological disaster area, where thousands of acres and entire species are sacrificed forever on an around-the-clock basis to short-term slash-and-burn agriculture; a two million square mile monument to human arrogance and stupidity. Most of us nave never seen it, most of us never will. From this the user. Users also seem to see the experience as real, not a "hallucination" in the usual sense of the word, and a portal to other worlds which exist alongside our own.[2]

Although the name is often used synonomously with the jungle liana,

Banisteriopsis caapi, "ayahuasca" as a hallucinogenic substance does not properly refer to one single plant, but to a singular *mixture* of two very different plant species. Nobody would confuse a Martini with either of its discrete psychoactive ingredients, gin or vermouth, so in that sense, there is no such thing as an "ayahuasca plant," or a "yage *plant,"* any more than there is a simple liquor simply called "Martini." Ayahuasca correctly refers to a psychedelic *combination* of plants which varies in potency according to the skill of its maker.

While each shaman has his own secret formula for the mixture (with probably no two exactly alike), it has been established that true ayahuasca always contains both beta-carboline and tryptamine alkaloids, the former (harmine and harmaline) usually obtained from the *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine, and the latter (N, N-dimethyl-tryptamine, or DMT) from the leaves of the *Psy-chotria viridis* bush. (There may be variations among plant species, but the alkaloids are always consistent.)

It is significant to note that *neither one of these plant substances by itself is normally psychoactive in oral doses.* (Harmine/harmaline is said to effect hallucinosis at highly toxic levels, but in less heroic quantities it is at best a tranquilizer, at worst an emetic.) DMT, in any quantity, is not orally active unless used in combination with a monoamine oxidase (MAO) inhibitor. This principle is precisely what makes ayahuasca effective; the harmala alkaloids in the *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine are potent short-term MAO inhibitors which synergize with the DMT-containing *Psychotria viridis* leaves to produce what has been described as one of the most profound of all psychedelic experiences.

Parenthetically, it must be noted that the concept of MAO inhibition is complex and hardly obvious to everyday experience. Indeed, it was not fully understood by Western science until about forty years ago. Yet, in the Amazon, "primitive" cultures have been making use of this principle in their ayahuasca brews for hundreds of years, if not for millennia. Anthropologists ask us to believe that these tribes (from widely separated areas, speaking different languages, and many of them deadly-enemies) all managed to discover the "ayahuasca principle" on their own by trial and error. Considering the sheer number of plant species growing in just one square mile of rain forest (not to mention all

of the possible *combinations* of plants), for each individual tribe to come up with the correct mixture "on its own by trial and error" beggars the imagination with its extreme improbability.

The Indians have no'problem with this enigma. They claim that the plants themselves taught them how to make the brew.

The Indians...say *(yage)* is a special gift from God for Indians and for Indians only. "Yage is our school, yage is our study," they may say, and yage is conceived as something akin to the origin of knowledge and their society. It was. yage that taught the Indians good and evil, the properties of animals, medicines, and food plants.[3]

As we have already seen, shamanic* cultures, worldwide share the near-universal belief that each plant species contains "spirits" which can be utilized as allies for shamanic work. In thus in stance, it is difficult to come up with a better expla nation, since modern science's discovery of MAO-inhibition in the 1950s came about only through the combination of pure research in conjunction with highly sophisticated laboratory procedures, a worldview which is about as far removed from the pragmatic affairs of shamanism as their concerns are removed from us.

It is important to emphasize at this point that MAO inhibition is an extremely important principle of human metabolism which must be thoroughly understood by anyone intending to experiment with ayahuasca or its analogues.

Here's why:

Monoamine oxidase (MAO) is an enzyme produced in the human body which acts something like a chemical version of our white blood cells; -that is, its function is to break down potentially destabilizing amines present in our food and render them harmless. One might think of monoamine oxidase as the active agent in a kind of "chemical immune system" which helps to regulate metabolism and maintain a healthy chemical balance in our bodies. A monoamine oxidase *inhibitor* (MAOI) is

any substance which *inhibits* the protective unction of monoamine oxidase. (To extend our metaphor, one could imagine it operating like a temporary "chemical AIDS virus" which immobilizes the chemical immune system.)

Many substances have been identified as MAOIs, but they all fall into one of two categories: *'reversible* MAOIs and *reversible* MAOIs. An irreversible monoamine oxidase inhibitor is any chemical substance which actually destroys monoamine oxidase in the body. Despite the irreversible" appellation, this effect isn't "forever," but it does take about two weeks for one's metaboism to synthesize new MAO. Although there may be some plant-based irreversible MAOIs, the only ones I know of are synthetic drugs, such as Tranyl-cypromine (Parnate), a commonly prescribed antidepressant.

A reversible MAOI, as its name implies, is a much shorter-acting substance, and a potentially useful one when wisely combined with any tryptamine hallucinogen. The harmala alkaloids harmine and harmaline) present in *Banisteriopsis caapi* are reversible MAOIs, with a life in the body of about six hours, which is just about the length of an average ayahuasca trip. What happens is that the harmala half of the ayahuasca brew inhibits the action of monoamine oxidase in the body, thus enabling the DMT half of the potion to interface with your brain synapses. Think of it as the harmala line-blocker making it possible for the DMT quarterback to score a touchdown.

Unfortunately, this blocking action is nonselective; it enables numerous other substances to score as well. So when MAO defenses are blocked, the body is vulnerable to many potentially dangerous :chemical reactions. Obviously, the main problem . with the use of any monoamine oxidase inhibitor is that if it is not used wisely, which is to say *shamanically,* one could very easily wind up dead. Dietary restrictions are therefore mandatory when ingesting any MAO-inhibiting substance, a discipline strictly adhered to by all South American shamans using

ayahuasca:

The necessity of the diet — which includes also sexual segregation — to learn from the plants was stressed by every *vegetalista* (ayahuasca shaman) I met. The body has to be purified to communicate with the spirit realm. Only in this way will the neophytes acquire their spiritual helpers, learn *icaros* (power songs), and acquire their *yachay, yausa,* or *mariri* — phlegm the novice receives at some point during his initiation, either from the senior shaman or from the spirits.... You can only become a good *vegetalista* by keeping a diet or fasting for years.... One of the reasons shamanism is declining among Indians and mestizos alike is because young people don't bother to keep the difficult diet.[4]

It is easy to see from this that ayahuasca is not. even remotely a recreational drug. It is an extremely potent hallucinogen which no one should ingest carelessly, or without a full understanding of how it works in the body. Intelligent, informed use is quite safe — unintelligent use could be poten- tially fatal. Probably the first and most important rule for Western drug experimenters to remember is that THE HARMALA ALKALOIDS (OR ANY MAOI) MUST NEVER BE COMBINED WITH ANY AMPHETAMINE-TYPE DRUG — THIS SPECIFICALLY INCLUDES PEYOTE AND SAN PEDRO, AS WELL AS MDMA (ECSTASY).

Here's what one can expect by ignoring these warnings:

A severe, atypical headache is usually the first sign, and may herald an impending crisis, which can end in a cerebrovascular accident and death. The hypertensive syndrome is usually characterized by headache, palpitations, flushing, nausea and vomiting, photophobia, and occasionally hyperpyrexia, arrhythmias, and pulmonary edema.... Foods with high tyramine content are a major concern. This chemical is a fermentation byproduct. Any food with aged protein should therefore be avoided....

[A prohibited food list includes, but is not restricted to: cheese, beer, wine, pickled herrings, snails, chicken livers, yeast products, figs, raisins, pickles, sauerkraut, coffee, chocolate, soy sauce, cream and yogurt.]

Monoamine oxidase inhibitors and many pharmacological agents are synergistic, sometimes resulting in a hypertensive crisis. The agents with which the MAOIs may be synergistic include: amphetamine, dextroamphetamine, methyl amphetamine, ephedrine, procaine preparations (which usually contain norepinephrine), epinephrine, methyldopa, and phenylpropanolamine (over-the-counter cold preparations)....

Acute toxicity can be very serious with the MAOIs. The signs of intoxication often do not appear until 11 or more hours after ingestion... Most characteristic of a severe overdose is paradoxical hypertension. The elevation of blood pressure can precipitate pulmonary edema, circulatory collapse, or intracranial hemorrhage.

The management of a serious overdose is generally symptomatic. Since hypertension may be acutely life-threatening, aggressive treatment with phentolamine.... 5.0 mg IV, is indicated. Phentolamine, 0.25-0.5 mg IM every 4-6 hr, may be used thereafter to control blood pressure. If this drug is not available, chlorpromazine is a good alternative. The initial dose is chlorpromazine 50 mg IM, with 25-mg IM doses used every 1-2 hr thereafter to control the hypertension. The patient's blood pressure should be monitored carefully, since marked hypotension may follow a hypertensive episode.[5]

Although I have yet to try classical jungle ayahuasca, my limited experience with its various analogues has convinced me that this is one sub-stance that no sane person would ever ingest at a Rave or a Grateful Dead concert, or in any other "recreational" setting, for that matter. It's just too intense and physically debilitating for that. Assuming that one understands the restrictions and abides by them, what is it like to ingest ayahuasca safely, properly — shamanically?

Taking yage is awful: the shaking, the
vomiting, the nausea, the shitting, the tension.
Yet it is a wonderful thing, awful and

unstoppable. From his stay with forest people of the Vaupes in Columbia in 1939, Irving Goldman concluded... that "the Cubeo do, not take [yage] for the pleasure of its hallucinations but for the intensity of the total experience, for the wide range of sensation. I spoke to no one who pretended to enjoy it." ...In the excretions are visions. The stream of vomit, I had often been told, can become a snake or even a torrent of snakes, moving out from and back into you. In the stream of nasal mucous, in the shitting, in the vomiting, in the laughter as in the tears, there lies a sorcery-centered religious mythology as lived experience, quite opposed to the awesome authority of Christianity in its dominant mode as a state religion of submission. In this ...world of yage ...there is no way by which shit and holiness can be sepa rated.[6]

Ayahuasca is exotic stuff — few of us are able to travel to Amazonia to experience its effects, and the plants from which it is traditionally compounded are tropical species which do not thrive outside of the rain forest. Terence McKenna has perceived this problem and hinted at its resolution:

Probably only a synthetic duplication of ayahuasca compounded with the correct percentages of DMT and beta-carbolines will ever make the experience available outside the area where it is endemic.[7]

This is precisely the concept of an "ayahuasca analogue." That is to say, if it were possible to find other, less tropical (hence easier to grow in Northern latitudes) plants containing the same alkaloids found in *Banisteriopsis caapi* and *Psychotria viridis* then the psychedelic experience provided by ayahuasca would be available to almost anyone or the planet willing to grow the plants and compound the potion. This

search for the perfect ayahuasca analogue is currently the hottest topic in the American psychedelic subculture.

Happily, there are several nontropical species which match the specifications for a chemically correct ayahuasca brew. The MAO-inhibiting portion of the formula is found in a truly amazing plant, *Peganum harmala,* or Syrian Rue. Harmine and harmaline were first isolated from the seeds and roots of this Middle Eastern weed in concentrations as high as four percent by weight, an extremely high percentage which is claimed by some to exceed that of the Amazonian liana, *Banisteriopsis :caapi*. Indeed, the harmala alkaloids actually take their name from this plant species.

Syrian Rue has a long history in Asia Minor, where its seeds are used to make the carpet dye known as Turkish Red. Apparently introduced many years ago into the U.S. by an aanonymous plant enthusiast who lived near Deming, New Mexico, *Peganum harmala* escaped from cultivation and by 1938 was found growing as far east as Pecos, Texas. Now it is officially reported from Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada and California. I have even heard of it surviving Montana winters, so obviously, once started in a favorable location, it becomes a hardy desert perennial.

Official literature leads one to believe that this plant has "taken over" (it is targeted for weed eradication programs in some areas), but on a re-

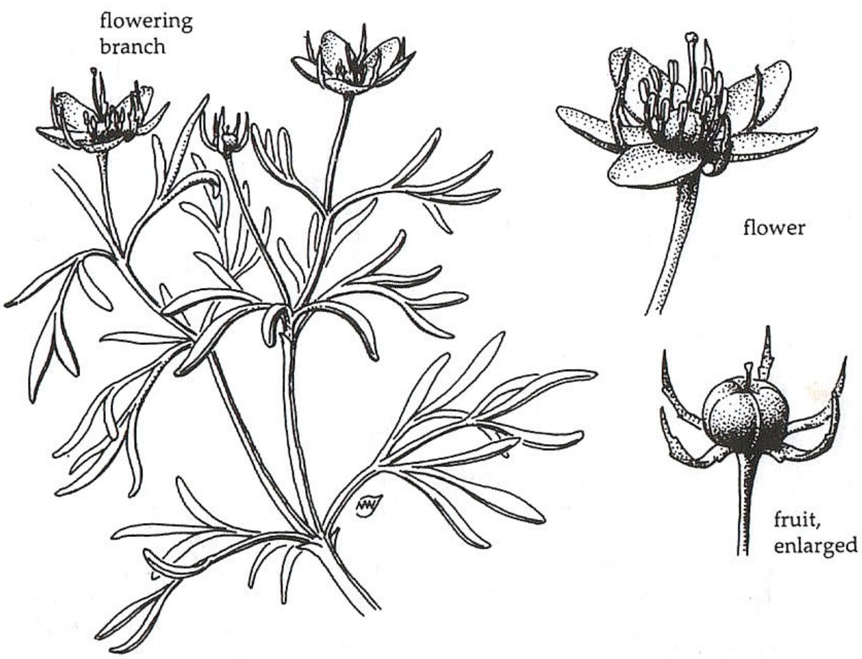


Figure 10-1
Peganum
harmala, or
"Syrian Rue."

-cent collecting trip through its adopted habitat I found it to be rather difficult to find. One spot to look is on Interstate 10 between Fort Stockton and El Paso, Texas. In August of 1992 there were several Syrian Rue plants growing on the freeway median immediately east of exit number 159. I collected about a half pint of seeds from only three plants — there were many left remaining.

Nevertheless, shamanic usage suggests that one raise one's own mother plants for seed production. There is an incredible amount of subtle energy exchanged between the cultivator and the growing plants. This sounds mystical but only someone who has done it can really understand what I'm trying to communicate. There is far more to this business than left-brain logic would suggest; as "sophisticated" Westerners we dismiss the entities of the imaginal realm and are, to our

disadvantage, dismissed by them in return.

One must... have some spiritual contact to give one strength; one's way of being must be appropriate because we are influenced by spiritual beings. Even though they are not seen, it is true they exist. They are the ones that have taken over these plants. They are the conservers, they take care of the plants. This is why they don't give visions to persons who don't comply with all the requirements of this so-called *ciencia vegetalista,* which in the old days was known as *alquimia palistica* [plant alchemy].[8]

As if to test one's commitment, the Syrian Rue plant will demand any cultivator's careful attention; this is no Boston Fern, but a strangely complicated "weed" that can thrive in the most barren of desert soils, yet is quite difficult to maintain even under controlled greenhouse conditions. The cultivation instructions for Peganum harmala published by a nursery specializing in exotic plants provides a good introduction to your own unique experience:

Cultivation: Seeds germinate fairly reliably by scattering them thinly over the surface of normal, moist seed mix and tamping them in. Keep in a little bit filtered sun and maintain
moisture. Temperature should be kept warm. We let them stay put for a while, even if crowded, since disturbing the young seedlings can be fatal. Once they seem like they have solid bases at the stem, carefully transplant with attention to the fine root hairs and adhering soil, so as not to unduly break them or bare-root the seedlings. Repot by burying a little deeper than before. Place out of full sun for a while and water them but don't overdo it. Seeds will continue to spontaneously sprout even years later from the sowing mix. There seems to be a narrow niche this species requires to be happy, and we have never quite found it. In, the wild, despite mother bushes casting off thousands of viable seeds all summer and fall, relatively few take hold. Those young plants seen in the habitat are in specific microclimates: indentations of livestock hooves in the soil, perhaps offering more moisture and a bit of sun shadow in the print. The seeds often sprout magnificently, only to

succumb to uncertain cultivation needs. Best to use sandy mix, only water when they are obviously needing, offer a partial filter from direct mid-day sun and make sure they are warm. In natural habitat it gets pretty cold at night, but it is during a dry season and we are told some people have great success storing their plants over winters by letting the plants actually dry up in the pots, put them in a dark, dry, cool spot and bring them back to life in spring. We have a few old mother plants who sometimes skip a whole year without any sign of life, only to make green leaves at unpredictable times.[9]

Unfortunately, I have found *Peganum harmala* to be more than a little tricky to grow from seed. Having finally raised a half-dozen plants past the early seedling stage, I would definitely not start them in flats, the procedure recommended above. These seeds are tiny, but it is worth the extra trouble to plant them individually (use tweezers) in peat pots for later transfer to larger containers. Transplanting stresses these seedlings enormously, and the amount of special care then required to nurse them back to health is avoided if one plants them individually. Peat pots transfer easily and without root trauma to outside locations or larger containers.

While Syrian Rue is generally recognized as the best non-rain forest source of harmala alkaloids, DMT sources seem not to be so firmly established. Plants containing DMT are not too hard to find, however. *Desmanthus illinoensis* (a weed legume common in the midwest), *Arundo donax* (a bamboo-like plant apparently introduced from India, and found growing wild in many areas of the U.S.), and *Phalaris arundinacea* (a common grass species) have all been found to contain DMT in various concentrations. There are some indications that this alkaloid may actually be very common — all that is 3cking is some sophisticated chemical analysis of likely plant varieties.

The *leguminosae,* for example, are an extremely large botanical family which have yielded many DMT-containing plants. I once found what I assumed was a *Desmanthus* species growing along a Texas highway.

They mow the road shoulders in Texas regularly, and most of the plants growing there get pretty severely pruned several times each summer. What I thought was *Desmanthus* was actually a very stunted mesquite bush, another legume species which in terms of numbers may be the most common wild plant in the Lone Star State. The leaf configuration of *Desmanthus* and mesquite is very similar. Out of curiosity (once I'd realized my mistake), I looked mesquite up in Michael Moore's *Medicinal Plants of the Desert and Canyon West a*nd was amazed to find that at least some species of this plant contain in their leaves, pods and bark: 5-hydroxytryptamine and tryptamine. These alkaloids are not molecularly far removed from N,N -dimethyltryptamine, or DMT. What I'm suggesting is that there may be DMT-containing plants growing all around us, and that the legumes light be a good place to start looking for them.

Of the three common United States DMT sources, *Arundo donax,* although very plentiful in places, may be the least useful for ayahuasca experiments. Field chromatographs show it to contain several alkaloids in addition to DMT, and they may cause unpleasant side effects. For example, I once ingested one gram of *Peganum harmala* extract with 50 mg of an *Arundo donax* extraction. There was no psychoactivity at all, but I did suffer a modest allergic reaction. Within an hour I noticed that my vision was impaired — there was some difficulty in focusing on the print in a magazine. Later, my eyes felt watery and slightly swollen. The next day, I had a medium conjunctivitis with occasional hives appearing on my body. It took three days for these symptoms to subside. Obviously, one should take extreme care when experimenting with any new plant species, especially those which have no known history of shamanic usage.

To date, I haven't tried an extraction of *Desmanthus illinoensis* (Prairie Mimosa, Illinois Bundle-weed, Illinois Bundleflower), but correspondents tell me that a closely related species, *Desmanthus leptolobus,* contains significantly higher concentrations of DMT. The alkaloids are found in the root bark of both species, which should be

separated from the root core immediately after harvest. (Once the root has dried, it is very difficult to strip the bark from the core.) An easy way to accomplish this is to pound the whole fresh root with a hammer. This splits the bark so that it peels easily and may then be dried for later processing. (Procedures for extracting the alkaloids from all of these plants are found in a later chapter.)

Of all of the currently known North American DMT sources, certain *Phalaris* grass varieties seem to offer the most in terms of easy cultivation and practicality of extraction. This is because it is only the root bark of both *Arundo donax* and the *Desmanthus* species which contains the alkaloid *'we* seek. This means that a mature (several years old) plant must be sacrificed to obtain its root material. The DMT in *Phalaris* grass, on the other hand, is concentrated in its leaves and stalks. Potent extractions can be made from what are no more than "grass clippings," so it is not necessary to sacrifice any mother plants. In addition, *Phalaris* is extremely easy to raise — it survives freezing winters up into Canada, and will actually grow almost anywhere. Although it's a rather coarse grass, it could even be planted as one's front lawn — in which case, a single mowing might easily provide enough DMT for a year's worth of ayahuasca sessions.

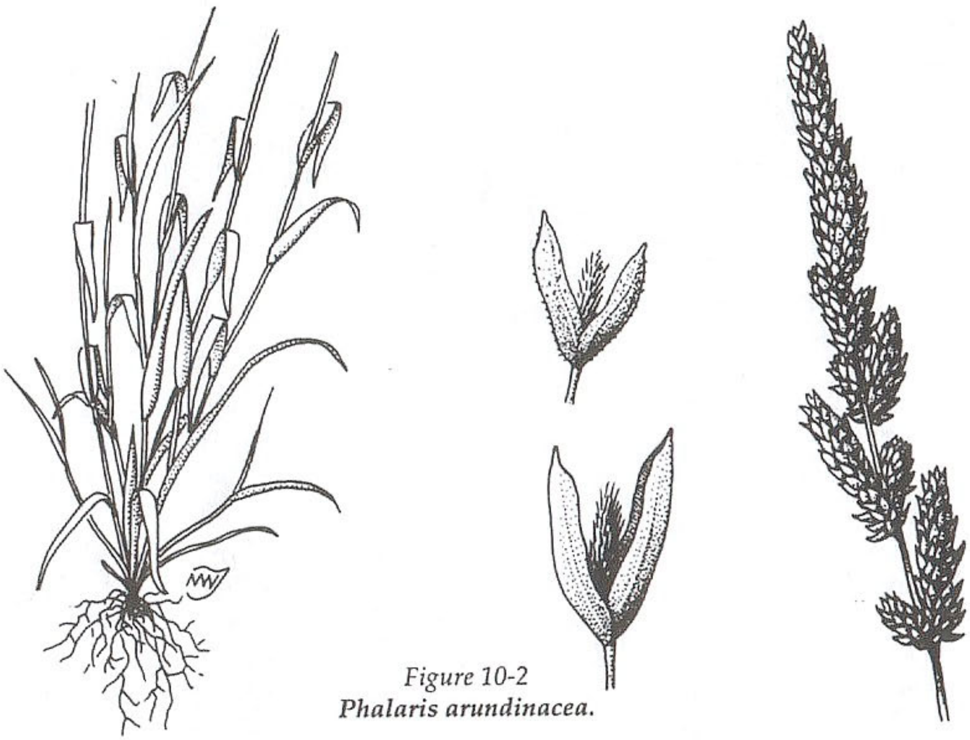


Figure 10-2
Phalaris arundinacea.

I combined 125 mg of harmala extract with 50 mg of a *Phalaris* grass extraction. This time there was no allergic reaction and the potion was defi-nitely psychoactive. Unfortunately, like most ayahuasca combinations, this was accompanied by strong waves of nausea. The experience was what Shulgin describes as a "plus-2" — there was definite activity, but not so much that I couldn't function in an emergency if I had to. The trip could have been stronger (compared with two grams of *Psilocybe cubensis*, for example), but it was unquestionably "psychedelic."

Like all ineffable states, this is difficult to translate into words — there was a novel impression of at least three energy fields radiating from my body at set "wave-lengths." An unusual sensation, unlike anything I've ever encountered before. There were bright hypnogogic type visions (immediately forgotten) and an extremely tranquilized "weak" feeling, almost as if my consciousness was connected to my body by the thinnest of threads. I won't call it an out-of-body experience, but it wasn't far from that. The nausea was a definite problem, although I managed not to vomit. (This was bad strategy, since the adventure

would probably have intensified considerably if I hadn't beer, focusing so much of my attention and energy on *not* barfing. Surrender is the name of the game in these situations.)

One Western adept, with considerable practice among South American *daime* cults, insists that gastrointestinal upset is neither inevitable nor some kind of ironclad measure of authenticity for an ayahuasca trip. (In other words, unlike some Native American peyotists who feel that the degree or nausea experienced is an index of one's spiritual growth or lack thereof, most native ayahuasca users would prefer not have to deal with nausea at all.) His research into dietary management and vitamin supplements suggests that taking one gram of Lecithin the previous day and again two hours before a session will eliminate most nausea In addition, sliced dried ginger chewed after drinking ayahuasca tea eliminates much of its bad taste.

As regards diet, unseasoned fish and bananas are commonly considered a proper preparation for ayahuasca ingestion in the Amazon. It is his observation that the Peruvian *ayahuasqueros* have the strictest restrictions — they prefer a bland, primarily vegetarian cuisine. For Westerners, who may not be so strict, minimum dietary precautions (in addition to all substances prohibited for ingestion with any MAO inhibitor) would forbid coffee and alcohol; fatty foods should also be avoided.

There seems to be a consensus emerging among those experimenting with the various ayahuasca analogue combinations that when taken in a group setting, the experience often tends toward some sort of healing crisis. Here is a description of a group session with extractions consisting of 125 mg harmala plus 50 mg of *Phalaris* alkaloids:

Harmala extracts were ingested first, with capsules pulled apart before swallowing. *Phalaris* alkaloids were taken fifteen minutes later, with the gummy extraction redissolved in just enough ethyl alcohol to put it into solution. This was then added to enough honey, hot water and vitamin C to make a tea solution to maximize absorption in the gut...

December 15, 1992... Six people. Began by sitting in the configuration

shown in L's dream. I sat back to back with her, with A, N, M, and S sitting in the four directions. After about thirty minutes L started to rock, chant and then repeat: "I remember, I remember." She went into a healing crisis and began purging a lot. Later she said she journeyed back through her DNA and accessed encoded memories all the way back to the primal ocean. She was very sick the whole night — it reminded me of my first jungle ayahuasca. She was in a healing crisis for almost a whole week afterwards. A and I began shamanizing. A sang and chanted to project sounds into L's body. I remained seated and chanted support to A's work. At one point I did some sucking, extraction and purging for L, and at times would try to challenge and connect with her, but she wanted no one to touch her. The grass rattle worked well. M, S and N stayed to themselves and rather quiet. About six hours....

The experience seems to have an inner visionary and informational focus when taken
quietly alone in the dark. On the other hand, taking it in a group setting with people one knows and trusts facilitates a shamanic, healing experience while enhancing interpersonal bonds and connections. One individual often goes into a healing crisis, and many of the rest of the group then begin shamanic work. At some point this is resolved, and then everyone tends to enter deeper physical and mental space with each other. The resulting energetic connections seem to be a part of the healing process. The fine light vibrations of the experience often last almost a week. I feel better physically than after mushrooms — strengthened rather than with that wiped-out feeling.[10]

In contrast to group work, the "inner visionary and informational focus" of the solitary ayahuasca session often involves a strong sense of contact with a teacher, alien entity, or some force leading one in directions of personal growth. Here is a dramatic account from a correspondent who used a "half-ayahuasca-analogue" combination, *Peganum harmala* seeds in conjunction with the classical Amazonian DMT source, *Psychotria viridis* leaves:

This experiment was conducted with 10 g of

Psychotria viridis leaves and about 8 g of *Peganum harmala* seeds, both purchased by mail through a botanical company. Both were crushed in a blender and gently boiled in a two gallon pot for 8 hours over the course of several days. After approx. 4 hours I put the water in a separate container and started over with fresh for another 4 hours. The vegetable material was then separated out and the two liquids combined and boiled down to a cup of dark green/black fluid. I did miscalculate during the second cooking — I fell asleep and found the water cooked out. I put in fresh immediately and the water assumed the proper dark color. This mistake may have affected the taste but I don't think it harmed the alkaloids.

My intentions were unclear: except that I wanted to explore. I know of no one who has tried this combination (I was not certain that it would work) and felt that I might be on the verge of a unique experience.

After the brew was reduced to about a cup, I put it in the fridge to cool to luke warm, and poured it into a larger glass. The dark fluid looked putrid and did not smell so nice. I braced myself and took about a quarter into my mouth. The best I can describe it is that the fluid jumped out of my mouth. I did not choke — the brew was simply rejected by my lips and tongue. I expelled it into the kitchen sink. After my initial shock (I thought Morning Glory juice was bad!), I braced and again tried the same amount with identical results.

I had now wasted about half the fluid. Lighting a cigarette, I sat down in the living room and re-evaluated. It was funny in a way — all the reading I had done, speculating, contemplating, the long wait and high cost of the leaves, the long preparation of the brew — and I couldn't get it down! I thought of don Juan laughing at Castaneda and called myself a fool.

I tried a third time, after rinsing my mouth with vodka in the hope of

numbing my tongue. The vodka may not have helped, but I did get the rest down. It was simply terrible in taste. For a few seconds it tried to come back up, but I successfully kept it down. I then went into the living room and lay on the couch. The time was 11:15 PM. My reading had indicated that the effects would come on very soon, so I waited. Depression and a certainty that the potion would not work soon overwhelmed me. Again I felt like a complete ass. I turned on the TV and began watching some horrible Psycho re-hash and finally closed my eyes. Within a few minutes I had the distinct sensation of pressure on my temples. A few seconds later I noticed movement behind my eyelids. I sat up. The room was shimmering. I passed a hand in front of my eyes and noticed a slight but definite trail. I got a head-to-toe shiver — it was going to happen! The time was 11:45.

...The room was lit up, everything looked bright, and faint patterns were visible on the walls. I was elated. I went to the bedroom and turned on a "Sounds of the Amazon Jungle" tape and lay down. The tape, which was being played on a cheap blaster, sounded like it was coming through a high end stereo. The animal and water sounds were accompanied by vivid images — this was particularly true of the jungle cats. At one point I had the impression of seeing inside one's mouth as its tongue vibrated.

When the sound of an insect buzzing began to irritate me, I turned off the tape, took cigarettes, matches and an ashtray into the much darker second bedroom, sat on the couch and stared. These images will be impossible to fully describe. At first, I was disappointed. I had hoped for the kind of visions McKenna describes — landscapes, vistas and the like. But this feeling soon vanished, for what I was seeing was wonderful. The terms "mosaic" and "tapestries" occurred to me. They were three-dimensional in nature and seemed to be floating about four inches in front of me. They seemed distinctly alien in design (Aztec?), alternately organic and calculated. I found myself saying, "Thank you" out loud in response to these lovely images. This went on for an indefinite period — I had lost all track of time.

Then the high weirdness began. The tapestries disappeared and were replaced by darkness. Soon stalagmites and floor-to-ceiling columns appeared. I was in a cave with rock formations that resembled trees designed by Dali — seemingly vegetable and mineral at the same time. As I "moved" among them, I noticed one that was much larger than the others. Getting closer, I noticed a large crack in its side, and then that the interior was hollow and illuminated by a pale blue light.

It was then that I noticed the entity. About the size of a large dog, but with reptilian characteristics. (The word "dragon" popped in and out.) It moved toward me the moment our eyes met. Only about eight feet of approach was necessary for it to press its face against the crack in the column. (Have you ever seen the Sci-fi classic "It Came From Outer Space"? There was a slight resemblance between the space monsters and this being.) I feel now that here I blew it. This being wanted to get close to me, yet I did not speak nor did I move closer. I forgot that I was a participant and not merely an observer. Time passed as we stared at each other. Finally this creature made a kissing movement with its "lips" and a glowing blue ball emerged from its mouth through the crack and hung in space. The rest of the image faded, but the ball — in 3-D — hung in my bedroom for some minutes. It finally faded away and I knew that the peak was over.... As I lay down in bed there were still patterns swirling behind my eyelids and vague images of people — all black.

The next day I had responsibilities, so it was necessary to get up much earlier than I wanted. My thinking was a bit fuzzy for an hour or two.... As for the entity — I am certain that it wanted to make contact, although I cannot imagine why. Next time I will enter the experience armed with a question. Even "Who are you?" would have been better than my blank stare. I fear the being took me for an idiot.[11]

The concept of creating ayahuasca analogues hasn't been around long enough to have settled yet in one consistently useful combination of plants or procedure; to date, most of my experiments in this area have been inconclusive and somatically discomforting. Nevertheless, using the principle of MAO inhibition to potentiate the

effectiveness of any tryptamine hallucinogen has been established beyond all doubt. Extractions made from *Peganum harmala* seeds are equally as powerful in their ef-fects as any of the Beta-carboline plants brewed in Amazonia. It is therefore not necessary to restrict the concept to just DMT admixtures; one gram of harmala extract combined with five grams of psilo-bin mushrooms results in an experience power-ful enough to challenge any would be explorer of tne imaginal realms. Although, as of this writing, I have yet to experience the full effects of either true" ayahuasca or any of its analogues, it is diffi-cult to imagine anything being much more power-ful than the above "mushroom ayahuasca" combination, with the possible exception of smokable DMT, which we will examine in the following chapter.

NOTES

1. Gorman, P. (1992). "Journeys with ayahuasca, the vine of the little death," *Shaman's Drum*, Fall, p. 49.
2. Lyttle, T. (1993). Review of *Ayahuasca Visions: the Religious Iconography of a Peruvian Shaman,* in: *Psychedelic Monographs & Essays* #6, p. 202.
3. Taussig, M. (1987). *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: a Study in Terror and Healing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 140.
4. Luna, Luis E. and Amaringo, Pablo. (1991). *Ayahuasca Visions: The Religious Iconography of a Peruvian Shaman,* North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, pp. 13,48. Reprinted with permission.
5. Bassuk, E.L., M.D., and Schoonover, S.C., M.D. (1977). *The Practitioner's Guide to Psychoactive Drugs,* Plenum, NY, p. 40, *passim.*
6. Taussig, *op. cit.,* pp. 406, 412.
7. McKenna, T. (1989). "Among Ayahuasquera," *Gateway to Inner Space,* Prism, Great Britain, p. 202.
8. Luna & Amaringo, *op. cit.,* p. 48.
9. Anonymous (1992). *Cultivation Details for Exotic Plants,* Of The Jungle, Box 1801, Sebastopol, CA 95473.
10. "Johnny Appleseed," (pseudonym) (1993). "Ayahuasca analog experiences," *The Entheogen Review,* Vol. 2, No. 2, Summer Solstice.
11. Anonymous (1992). Personal communication.

Chapter Eleven
SMOKABLE DMT FROM PLANTS

For the last 500 years, Western culture has suppressed the idea of disembodied intelligences — of the presence and reality of spirit. Thirty seconds into the DMT flash, and that's a dead issue.[1]

An extremely potent smokable form of DMT can be extracted from the reed canary grass *(Phalaris arundinacea)*. (Presumably the same holds true for any DMT-containing botanical, dozens of which have now been identified and continue to be discovered.)[2] I made this discovery more than a month after the manuscript of this book was completed and sent to the publisher. Therefore I offer this added chapter as something totally new. To the best of my knowledge this information has never been published in a book before, though I make no claim that I am the first person to discover it.

Like many such discoveries, this one was almost an accident. I had two crushed capsules of *Phalaris* concentrate which I wanted to salvage as an ayahuasca admixture. (See extraction chapter

for details of how to isolate *Phalaris* alkaloids.) I placed the material in a shot glass full of alcohol in order to redissolve the extract. After removing the cracked shards of gelatin, I set the glass aside and forgot about it. Of course, the alcohol soon evaporated, leaving behind a gummy tar. This lay around for a period of weeks. At one point I was about to throw it out, then on a sudden whim wondered what would happen if I smoked the stuff. Accordingly, I redissolved the tar in alcohol and added a pinch of oregano as an inert smoking medium. The alcohol was allowed to evaporate, leaving a very small amount (est. 250 mg) of Phalaris-soaked material. This sat around for several days — I had no real expectation that the mixture would be smokably psychoactive. (If it were, I'd have already heard about it, right?) Imagine my surprise when, in a very casual set and setting (the bedroom, early afternoon), I took one inhalation of this essence and found my mind immediately blasted into a cerebral hurricane of rapidly pulsing white light. Fortunately, I already knew what a DMT flash is like, so I was not totally taken by surprise. The following entries from my journal tell the unfolding story:

Journal entry, 10/1/93

Yesterday afternoon I smoked a small portion of oregano which had been soaked in about 50 mg *Phalaris* grass extract dissolved in alcohol and allowed to evaporate. This was material that R. made to be used in combination with *harmala* extract as an ayahuasca analog. The consequence was an *extremely powerful* DMT trip — equal to my injected DMT experience last January at UNM, though I didn't see any entities this time.

I can't help but think in terms of McKenna's "ingression of novelty into time." The implications are incendiary: a natural source of DMT, perhaps the most powerful hallucinogen on the planet, which can be grown in anyone's yard and extracted in their kitchen! DMT is one of the keys to the imaginal realm, but it isn't for everyone. If it becomes commonly available there will be some serious incidents with people being unable to handle it — i.e., it is certain to get a lot of very bad press. Yet, it could be a catalyst for a quantum leap in human awareness — something our species, not to mention the planet, could use right now.

Journal entry, 10/4/93

transcend the will — it is there, and one must deal with it. I haven't had

the experience often enough yet to know if one can learn to overcome the fear. Even Gracie and Zarkov say: "...we are always apprehensive before we smoke DMT..."

The feelings I've had suggest that it is the body, or "body-consciousness" (the "nefesh") that goes into a state of terror, and that it is extremely difficult for the higher levels of awareness not to be dragged down with it. The fact that DMT exists in the body already (in the pineal gland, significantly enough), and the fact that the DMT flash has many characteristics in common with the Near Death Experience, suggest that its normal function is to provide a transition between life and death, or more specifically: this world and the imaginal realm. It certainly feels like a "little death" when you smoke it:

"With a fully effective dose (e.g., 25 mg), the experience is usually so bizarre that an inexperienced person may believe that he or she has died, or is dying, especially if body awareness is lost."[3]

Journal entry, 10/16/93

S. and I smoked a pipeful together with a "tantric-toker" pipe I made. (One bowl, two stems — we each inhale at the same time.) Incredibly intense trip -- possibly the most intense to date with this new material. I had to take deep breaths to flow with it.

Journal entry, 10/27/93

Smoked a concentrated *Phalaris* extract: est. 50 mg. in one toke. Amazing trip — I think I passed out: can't account for time. Kept asking myself where I was: I thought I was in the bedroom, but then became aware that I was in the office. This was extremely disorienting and happened more than once: I kept forgetting my location in space/time.

Further insights: The fear associated with DMT ingestion is something that seems to

Then a beautiful pun/mantra: "The third I is we."

I saw S. and me as some kind of royalty: Hindus perhaps, but also Egyptian vibes. I was sitting on S.'s right and a little bit lower, though we were also somehow "equals." This is "us" on some higher plane of existence. Much must be forgotten because it all has a dream-like quality to it: I was definitely "somewhere else."

Journal entry, 10/28/93

Woke up in strange altered state. Still feel it. My psyche is going through some powerful changes for sure.

Journal entry, 10/29/93

By far the heaviest trip yet. Thank god S. was there to hold onto: I almost passed out. Came out of it with tingling extremities due to hyperventilation. An implosion of light and energy so intense that it was touch and go whether I could remain sane. It will probably be a while before I smoke this stuff again. Utterly terrifying!

A great deal of work remains to be done in learning how to use this substance properly. This is the most subjective of all possible experiences and like any psychedelic, it will take you right where you're at. (Where else?) S. hasn't been scared yet, and she encounters radiant beings — but then, she's also had a Near Death Experience. I just see intense white light and try not to be swept away by fear. I have more inner work to do before I'll be ready for this again. Intuition suggests that breath and sound are two areas to explore in creating a shamanic framework for using this material.

DMT is a normal part of human metabolism (it is apparently synthesized in the pineal gland or third eye") and is considered physically benign, but while it's sparking across your synapses it's difficult not to believe otherwise. The onset is sudden and intense — it is already coming on before you've exhaled. Resist the impulse to resist; flow with it, breathe with it: imagine a Zen meditation at Hiroshima ground zero. Knowing that it won't last very long helps considerably. Within ten

minutes or so, it is already subsiding.

Some Comparisons

LSD, at *best,* is a chemical synthesized in a laboratory by a Ph.D., a drug presently obtainable only from a complex technology via an underground hierarchy of "dealers." It is therefore the example *par excellence* of a contemporary consumer-culture psychedelic. Aside from any positive effects it may produce, it is still inextricably entangled within a toxic and moribund techno-economic system. The same holds for all of the synthetic hallucinogens with capital-letter names: PCP, MDMA, 2-CB, etc.

Ayahuasca, a synthesis of rainforest plants, is an Amazonian shaman's drug. It is traditionally used by people who live within an entirely different set and setting than our own. It did not grow out of our culture, and is arguably a forced transplant; modern Westerners do not easily accept the concept of plant teachers nor are we comfortable with the severe somatic side effects of this substance.

Phalaris DMT is something brand new — derived from one of the ayahuasca analog plants, it is a natural form of DMT and 5-MeO-DMT which can be grown by anyone anywhere on the planet outside of the polar regions. It has no somatic side effects (nausea, vomiting), nor is it dependent for its extraction on complicated laboratory procedures, equipment or knowledge; hence it isn't necessary to rely upon a profit-oriented monopoly of dealers to obtain. It comes on fast, is too intense, and subsides rapidly: just like the way we live our lives. Here for the first time, untainted by High Technology, Drug Dealer Capitalism, Cultural Unfamiliarity or Somatic Malaise, is the most potent entheogen imaginable freely available to anyone willing to take the trouble to grow and extract it. (Since the plant resembles your front lawn, any law banning it will be virtually unenforcable.)

Given the historical context of this sudden gift, it is difficult not to see it as a potential catalyst for a quantum shift in awareness, nothing less than a challenge from the imaginal realm to take the next step in

human evolution.

May the force be with us: don't profane the light.

Notes

1. Terence McKenna, (1993). *Green Egg* interview,Summer.
2. There is much research to be done in this area. Obviously, a lot depends upon each species and its varieties as well as differences in individual plants. For example, an extraction made from the root bark of *Desmanthus illinoensis* produced only threshold symptoms, a plus-one in Shulgin's categories of intensity. Careful scrutiny is needed to determine the best way to extract and concentrate the alkaloids in any DMT-containing botanical.

   Unwanted admixture alkaloids (such as seem to be encountered in *Arundo donax*, for example) must also be taken into consideration Addendum: After this book went to press a Swiss drug laboratory completed a full chemical analysis of the variety of *Phalarais arundinacea* I have been working with. The primary alkaloid here is 5-MeO-DMT: a close molecular analogue of DMT itself. *P. arundinacea* is notorious for extremely wide variations in the tryptamine alkaloids it contains — some varieties have either DMT or 5-MeO-DMT, others contain both, and some contain neither! The subjective differences between the two substances are quite distinct: DMT is very visual, with lots of color; 5-MeO- DMT tends to be more intense, but with less of a visual component. No one who has experienced both would be apt to mistake one of this hallucinogens for the other. A friend describes 5-MeO-DMT as "the Power" and DMT as "the Glory." There's no denying that a combination of the two can result in the religious experience described in the Old Testement as "the fear of God."
3. Meyer, P. (1993). "Discarnate entities induced by dimethyltryptamine (DMT)," *Psychedelic Monographs and Essays*, No. 6, Boynton Beach, FL, p. 39.

Chapter Twelve

PSILOCYBIN : "MAGIC MUSHROOMS"

The earliest report of [psilocybin] mushroom ingestion comes from Tezozomoc, who commented on the celebrants at the coronation of Montezuma II seeing visions and hearing voices: "therefore they took these hallucinations as divine notices, revelations of the future, and augury of things to come."[1]

The above described coronation occurred in the year of 1502, about seventeen years before the Spanish invasion. Montezuma, in addition to being monarch, was a temple priest for the Aztec war god, Huitzilopochtli, one of the most homicidal Archons ever to emerge from the imaginal realm. In addition to eating psychedelic mushrooms, Montezuma and his coronation guests participated in ceremonials in which thousands of still throbbing hearts were ripped from living humans and piously offered up to their savage god. Huitzilopochtli, a solar deity, demanded these daily blood-offerings as "food," and if the rites were performed religiously, he promised his worshippers nothing less than world domination. This is a conventional covenant offered by entities of this type; schizophrenics often hear voices promising similar rewards for their unswerving obedience to equally insane commands.

While the dark forces have always utilized drugs to manipulate human beliefs, psychedelics are ultimately detrimental to their welfare; as denizens of mind-space, they cannot withstand too much expanded awareness because it eventually disempowers them where they live — in our heads. Although I have no sources to prove it, it is probable that some of the mushroom visions of Montezuma and his friends related to one of the most amazing prophecies in recorded history.

The Aztecs had a legend about their god Quetzalcoatl (Huitzilopochtli's arch rival), who'd left Mexico centuries earlier in a boat sailing eastward. This deity, portrayed as a bearded white man, said he would return to reclaim his kingdom in the year "one-reed" of the Aztec calendar, that is, 1519, the same year that Cortez and his fleet appeared off the coast of Veracruz. This augury preceded the Spanish arrival by many years, so when the bewhiskered and fair-skinned Europeans showed up *exactly* on *time,* the psychological effect on the Aztecs was devastating. Indeed, Cortez's relatively easy victory over a numerically superior enemy could hardly have taken place without the endorsement of this strange forecast.

Whatever the oracle's source, it would seem that other forces from mind-space opposed Huitzilopotchli's stranglehold on the Aztecs' belief systems, else why the prophecy? The hindsights of history, plus fresh insights from the imaginal realm, tempt the hypothesis of a teleological force shaping human evolution; although the Spanish Conquerors' cruel version of Christianity was seldom the religion of love and brotherhood it claimed to be, it was still an improvement over Huitzilopotchli's *status quo,* hence an advance (of sorts) in consciousness.

Psilocybin mushrooms continue to elicit images of pivotal future events; in Peter Stafford's *Psyche-delics Encyclopedia,* is described a vision of the Kennedy assassination by pioneer psilocybin researcher, Stanley Krippner:

...Lincoln's features slowly faded away, and those of Kennedy took their place. The setting was still Washington D.C. The gun was still at the base of the statue. A wisp of smoke seeped from the barrel and curled into the air. The voice repeated, "He was shot. The President was shot." My eyes opened; they were filled with tears... In 1962, when I

had my first Psilocybin experience, I gave this visualization of Kennedy relatively little thought, as so many other impressions came my way. However, it was the only one of my visualizations that brought tears to my eyes, so I described it fully in the report I sent to Harvard. Nineteen months later, on November 23, 1963, the visualization came back to me as I mourned Kennedy's assassination.[2]

This sort of thing is anathema to the belief systems of scientific materialists. Nevertheless, it stands as a documented case of precognition evoked by a psychedelic substance, as historically authentic as the famous prediction that toppled Montezuma from his throne. (Because psychotropic plants played such a large part in the theology of Pre-Columbian Mexico, I am assuming that the prophecy of Quetzalcoatl's return must certainly have been shaped by their ingestion.) Terence McKenna is always discussing these matters:

What the psilocybin experience seems to argue is that there is a kind of parallel universe that is not at all like our universe, and yet it is inhabited by beings with an intentionality... No reductionist, no empiricist could experience what I have experienced without having to seriously retool their philosophy.[3]

Historically, humans have invariably preferred the comfort of old paradigms to the challenge of new ones; those with a vested interest in the *status quo* never want to "seriously retool their philosophy." As far as I know, such rearrangements are *always* forced upon us.

By the end of the Eisenhower years, our *status quo* was badly in need of retooling. Although no one worshipped Huitzilopochtli by name any more, his spirit waxed fat on the burgeoning Viet Nam and Civil Rights conflicts. The times were calling for change, and psychedelic drugs were about to act as an inspiration to effect it. One way of interpreting this is that "beings with an intentionality" from the imaginal realm were about to use a species of fungus (plus several other substances) to nudge history in an entirely new direction. But first the catalysts had to be made available.

Psilocybin mushrooms were used shamanically by the Indians of Mexico

for hundreds, if not thousands of years, but they have been known to Western science only since 1953 when the celebrated R. Gordon Wasson and his wife rediscovered their ritual ingestion in a remote Oaxacan village. This was within a month or two of the time that Aldous Huxley began taking his first mescaline trips, which as we know resulted in the publication of *The Doors of Perception* the following year. The next summer, in June of 1955, Wasson ingested his first Psilocybin mushrooms, and in May of 1957 published his experiences in a *Life* magazine article. In 1958, Albert Hofmann isolated, named, and then synthesized the mushrooms' psychoactive alkaloids, psilocybin and psilocin.

By 1959, interest in the human potential of these new (to us) substances was expanding rapidly in scientific, intellectual and artistic circles. The psychedelic rocket of the sixties had been conceived and built; the countdown to launch time silently ticked off another whole year, as if history was forced to wait for the new decade to actually begin. Then, in the summer of 1960, Harvard psychologist Timothy Leary, while on vacation in Mexico, had his first psychedelic experience — on psilocybin mushrooms.

Those few fungi were the spark that ignited the fuse, and the decade soon shot off to explode seven years later in the starburst of San Francisco's famous "Summer of Love," felt by many to be the culmination of all that was best from that era. Of course, most psychedelics had been declared schedule-1 drugs in 1966, but by that late date this was like trying to outlaw fireworks halfway through a 4th of July celebration.

I lived in the Haight Ashbury during those years and watched in amazement as the scene progressively deteriorated from nubile girls in granny dresses passing out flowers in August to leather-clad bikers stomping some poor wretch in a doorway on New Year's Eve. Increasing confusion followed as the decade wound down into darkness. In retrospect, I think that the problem was simply that we didn't know how to handle psychedelics because our culture has never had a model for how to use them. If some old Amazonian shaman had been our guru instead of Timothy Leary, perhaps the era might have lived up to its

initial promise.

Or maybe not. Given the issues and lessons we needed to learn in the sixties, Leary seems to have been the right man in the right place at the right time, a man of destiny by any standard. Given his native enthusiasm, ultra-liberal bias and apparently innocent faith in human nature, almost single-handedly he opened up the unconscious mind of the masses like a can of peas. The masses weren't ready for it, of course, but the *status quo* was dealt a decisive blow; although we never really integrated the Peace and Love ideals of the summer of '67, for better or worse, human consciousness would never be quite the same again.

The sixties' fascination with psychedelics devolved into the seventies cocaine epidemic, which in turn descended into the "just say no" era of the eighties and a whole new *status quo* begging to be busted loose by a mass shift in consciousness. Out of this darkness emerged Terence McKenna, a drug guru for the nineties, who has made the psychedelic experience respectable again after years of excess, confusion and reactionary dogma. It is significant that his drug of choice is the psilocybin mushroom.

Although Leary started out doing psilocybin research, he almost immediately switched to LSD when that chemical became accessible to him. It remains to be proven, but it is quite possible that significant differences between the psychedelic experiences of the sixties and the nineties may be in the differences between these two drugs. LSD is a chemical molecule synthesized in a laboratory and was the psychedelic of choice in the 1960s. Psilocybin was never very popular in the drug subculture of that era, simply because there wasn't very much of it around. It is difficult to synthesize, and no easy way to grow the mushrooms was known at that time; with plenty of good acid on hand, messing around with fungi culture wasn't a high priority.

Although enterprising dealers often soaked supermarket mushrooms in LSD to sell on the street as "magic mushrooms," authentic psilocybin didn't become generally available until the mid-seventies, when the declining quality of street psychedelics turned their ingestion into a kind of cerebral Russian roulette. If you wanted to have the experience

without risking your mind and body, you had to grow your own catalyst.

In 1976, a small book, *Psilocybin Magic Mushroom Grower's Guide,* was published under the unlikely pseudonyms of O.T. Oss and O.N. Oeric, names allegedly chosen so that their publication would appear in bibliographies immediately ahead of the works of psychedelics researcher, Jonathan Ott. It is now public knowledge that these authors were Terence and Dennis McKenna. For the first time, a relatively simple method for growing mushrooms was presented to the public. This was apparently regarded by the authors as a moral act, a way to liberate people from the sleazy capitalism of street dealers and empower them to form a shamanic alliance with the mushroom itself.

By then, McKenna had accumulated enough experience with the *Psilocybe cubensis* species in South America to realize that this was not just a safe substitute for street acid, but a true *entheogen,* even an "entity in itself which was actively promoting the evolution of human consciousness.

The mushrooms said clearly, "When a species prepares to depart for the stars, the planet will be shaken to its core." All evolution has pushed for this moment, and there is no going back. What lies ahead is a dimension of such freedom and transcendence, that once in place, the idea of returning to the womb will be preposterous. We will live in the imagination.[4]

I interpret living "in the imagination" as having shamanic access to the imaginal realm. In that case, "departing for the stars" becomes a metaphor for entering inner rather than outer space. Unlike McKenna, I don't believe that it is realistically possible for meaningful numbers of us to physically leave the planet, but it may be time for some of us to exchange the necessity of physical incarnation for more expanded realms. This is a radically different message than Leary's "turn on, tune in, drop out" mantra from the sixties. Within that set and setting, the psychedelic experience took on political overtones which, although in keeping with the revolutionary spirit of the times, predictably evoked Inquisitorial repression so severe that even scientific psychedelic research was forbidden.

Although I encountered an inner voice on one LSD trip at the end of the seventies, the phenomenon apparently wasn't all that common in those days. We didn't really begin to hear much about voices and entities until McKenna began sharing his psilocybin mushroom and DMT experiences in the eighties and nineties. It was almost as if inner forces were waiting for us (and the planet) to get ready for them.

At the time of this writing, the imaginal realm is the focus of most serious (as opposed to recreational) interest in psychedelics. McKenna likens himself to a shipwrecked sailor returned to civilization to tell of the amazing New World he has seen just over the horizon. The metaphor is an apt one, though exploration of this contemporary Terra Incognita is not contingent upon sailing vessels or the patronage of monarchs, let alone access to spaceships or a trillion-dollar NASA budget. Anyone willing to eat five dried grams of *Psilocybe cubensis* mushrooms can enter the imaginal realm and verify for themselves if the reports about it are true.

At this point, I must reveal a personal bias regarding the plants discussed in this book. In my experience, the psilocybin mushrooms are the most consistently effective, easily produced catalysts I've discovered to date. I wouldn't eat datura on a bet; morning glory seeds and the mescaline cacti make me more sick than high, and the ayahuasca analogues haven't been perfected yet (though they may be by the time you read this). That leaves mushrooms — relatively easy to grow, not difficult to ingest (no horrible taste), seldom producing serious nausea, and consistently productive of a psychedelic state of consciousness. You don't usually eat mushrooms, then sit around for several hours trying not to vomit while wondering if you're feeling anything yet — there'll usually be no doubt about it within fifteen to forty-five minutes.

I resisted growing the psilocybians[5] for over twenty years. Sterile procedure is essential, and having worked as a lab assistant, I know how easy it is for contamination to occur even after taking the most stringent precautions. I believed it had to be more trouble than it was worth unless you had access to an expensive laboratory set-up — surely nobody could have much success doing this in their kitchen. Then one day a friend gave me three sealed petri dishes containing *Psilocybe cubensis*

mycelium growing on agar. Either I let the stuff die,or else I had to start growing mushrooms. I discovered, with the help of McKenna's book, that it really is not very difficult. You can count on losing a few dishes and jars to mold and bacteria, but you'll also get an amazing number of mushrooms. I would like to emphasize the point: *If you are reasonably careful, growing mushrooms is not difficult and the rewards far exceed the special care required for their cultivation.*

I will only briefly summarize my growing experience, since more explicit instructions for mushroom cultivation are readily available in two references which I regard as essential for anyone intending to grow the psilocybians:

1. Oss, O.T. & Oeric, O.N. (1976, 1986). *Psilocybin Magic Mushroom Grower's Guide,* Lux Natura, Berkeley.

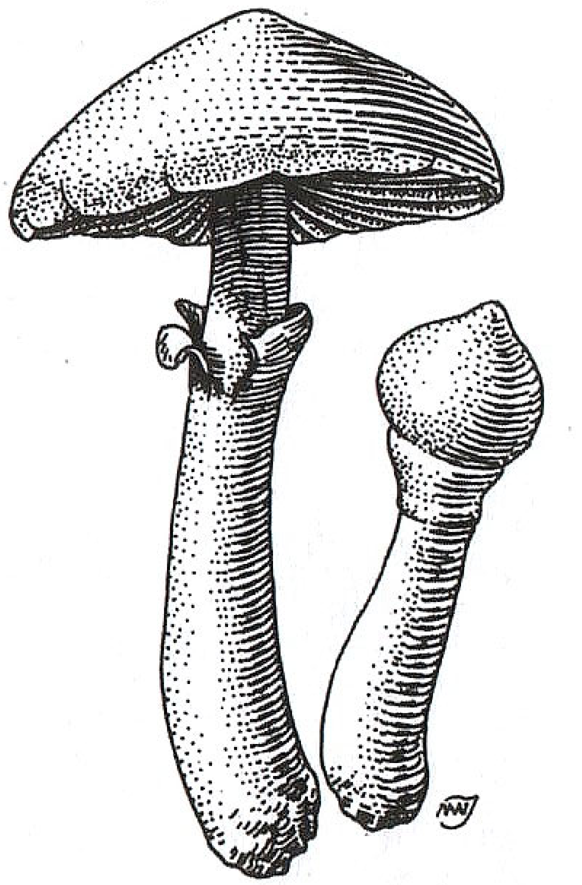


Figure 12-1
Psilocybe cubensis, *or* **Stropharia cubensis**,
more commonly known as "magic mushrooms."

2. Stamets, P. & Chilton, J.S., (1983). *The Mushroom Cultivator,* Agarikon Press, Olympia, WA.

If you live in the Pacific Northwest or along the Gulf Coast and know what to look for, it is easy to harvest wild psilocybians. However, the rest of us have to grow our own. Mycelium cultures are usually started from spores which may be purchased from various specialty outlets. (Since these spores contain no controlled substance they are currently legal to possess, except in California.)

The above books detail how to inoculate agar growing media with

spores by using an "inoculating hood." This is a sterile enclosure which may easily be constructed at home. I simply sealed all openings in a large cardboard box with duct tape, then cut two holes in the side to put my arms through. A square opening was made in the top to which a piece of clear plastic sheet was also taped — a "window" so you can see what you're doing. It is very simple to sterilize the interior of the box by spraying it with a 25% bleach solution followed by a Lysol or other disinfectant aerosol. The books give the essential details. I only include this to show that an inoculating hood need be neither expensive nor elaborate.

The McKenna book describes growing mushrooms in Mason jars. The Stamets book regards this procedure as obsolete, and advocates culture in trays or tubs. My experience endorses the latter view; it is both easier and more productive to grow mushrooms in inexpensive, plastic utility tubs. (The sort of thing found at Wal-Mart for $1.98.) When it comes time to "case" the mushroom spawn, simply pour a one-inch layer of perlite on the bottom of a tray or tub — this provides a place for excess water to drain. (An almost guaranteed vector for bacterial contamination is to have the mycelium-inoculated rye resting in water, a common problem in jar culture.) On top of the perlite layer place a sheet of mulch cloth, the material sold in nurseries to prevent weed growth in gardens while allowing water to permeate the soil. This prevents the inoculated rye from actually touching the perlite. Excess water is thus unable to wick up into the mycelium — you want to keep the mycelium moist, but not saturated. The mycelium-inoculated rye is then layered on top of the mulch cloth, and an inch or so of casing soil is layered over this. Daily spraying with water keeps it all moist so that the mushrooms can eventually push through the soil — a real thrill when it happens, since often there are literally hundreds of them.

All of the books say that you should dry the mushrooms as rapidly as possible, then place them in air-tight containers and freeze them until ready for use. I have found that an inexpensive plastic food dehydrator, the kind found in discount stores, will dry several dozen mushrooms within four or five hours. This is usually much faster than air or oven drying. When they are completely dry, the consistency of soda crackers, I powder them in a food grinder, weigh them in five-gram doses, place

in plastic baggies and then cram them tightly into an appropriately-sized jar for the freezer. The idea is to have them out of contact with the air, since oxidation will degrade them very quickly, even while frozen.

I don't "do" mushrooms very often, less than once a month. Philosophic or spiritual intent (for me) demands focus and restraint. I have found that an intense mushroom session will suffice for a long time, time needed to integrate the insights I have received. This becomes truer as I become older.

To really access the imaginal realm, one usually needs at least five grams of dried mushrooms. With potent stock, this might equal fifteen milligrams of pure psilocybin. Here are McKenna's observations about doses above this amount:

What's going on at thirty milligrams? Forty-five or sixty? These are not dangerous doses physically, but they're terrifying doses to contemplate from the point of view of the fragile constructs of the mind.... As you cross the five, six, seven gram barrier with mushrooms, it becomes less like a drug in the ordinary sense and more like a happening, an experience that is a unique encounter between you and something in another place.[6]

This undertaking, heavy enough in itself, can be potentiated enormously by adding one gram of *Peganum harmala* extract to a five-gram dose of dried Psilocybians. (Obviously, no one should attempt such a venture until they are familiar and comfortable with the mushroom experience alone.) I regard this combination as a legitimate ayahuasca analogue, even though the N,N-dimethyl-tryptamine (DMT) portion of the mixture is replaced with its close cousin, 4-phosphoryloxy-N,N-dimethyltryptamine (psilocybin). This is in no way a "recreational" compound evoking a "recreational" experience, although something resembling ecstasy might form a part of it:

Ecstasy is a complex emotion containing elements of joy, fear, terror, triumph, surrender, and empathy. What has replaced our prehistoric

understanding of this complex of ecstasy now is the word comfort, a tremendously bloodless notion. Drugs are not comfortable, and anyone who thinks they are comfortable or even escapist should not toy with drugs unless they're willing to get their noses rubbed in their own stuff.[7]

This is new territory for me, and I have only begun to explore it. Suffice it to say that I have seen cities which do not exist in consensus reality, the kinds of cities described by ayahuasqueros in the Amazon. Luna and Amaringo in their wonderful book on ayahuasca shamanism, report on the ubiquity of this vision (in Luna's words):

About one-third of the visions presented in this book... contain an iconographical motif that I have not yet fully explored with Pablo: a city or cities. Their architecture is either diffusely Eastern — Chinese, Arabic, Indian — or futuristic, or both. They may be located in the underwater world or on another planet. Pablo says that these cities are places of learning where shamans are instructed in various disciplines by very advanced spiritual beings. They are infinite in number, and consist of subtle and purified matter.[8]

William Burroughs, in *The Yage Letters,* also mentions this phenomenon: "That night I had a vivid dream... A composite city familiar to me but I could not quite place it. Part New York, part Mexico City and part Lima which I had not seen at this time... Incidentally you are supposed to see a city when you take Yage." [9]

My initial explorations with "mushroom ayahuasca" have so far been too somatically enervating for me to be able to do much focused work with it. One is quite simply "flattened" by the mixture.

Like most authentic ayahuasca experiences, some gastrointestinal upset is par for the course, but by then one's consciousness is so profoundly transformed, that nausea and vomiting are somehow beside the point.

Notes

1. Stafford, P. (1992). *Psychedelics Encyclopedia,* Ronin, Berkeley, p. 275.
2. *Ibid.,* p. 276.
3. McKenna, T. (1991). "Sacred plants and mystic realities," *The Archaic Revival,* Harper, San Francisco, pp. 241-2.
4. McKenna, T. (1993). *Omni* interview, May, p. 92.
5. There are many species of mushroom which contain the hallucinogen psilocybin —- almost all of them from the genus *Psilocybe.* It is now common practice to refer to these species generically as "psilocybians."
6.McKenna, T. (1993). *Green Egg* interview, Summer, p. 17.
7. McKenna, T. (1993). *Omni* interview, May, p. 90. Luna, Luis E. and Amaringo, Pablo. (1991). *Ayahuasca Visions: The Religious Iconography of a Peruvian Shaman,* North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, p. 41.
8. Burroughs, W. & Ginsburg, A. (1963). *The Yage Letters,* City Lights, San Francisco, p. 16.

Chapter Thirteen

THE MINOR PSYCHEDLICS

"Unless you're into caffeine, nicotine or alcohol, the phrase 'legal high' is a contradiction in terms." (Remark overheard at psychedelic plant conference.)

One of the minor themes running through this book is the prevalence of psychedelic myths in a culture that regards itself as rational and scientific. No one who has even superficially studied psychedelia can avoid immersion in a confusing hodgepodge of maddeningly contradictory data. Sometimes it seems as if there is at least a two-to-one mythology to science ratio — even acknowledged experts often disagree.

Most of this is undoubtedly a consequence of the subject's illegality (rumor thrives when facts are repressed), but after a while one begins to suspect
that there is more to it than that. The mythmaking archetypes in the human psyche transcend easy access, and when using psychedelic drugs to create an interface between space-mind and the imaginal realm, we are confronting these forces with few precedents or cultural sanctions to guide us. Lacking a clear tradition (shamanic, religious or scientific) to

give structure to these perceptions it is no wonder that we dredge up a gumbo of fact and fantasy liberally seasoned with belief and desire. It seems to me that we are at a place analogous to that of the early cartographers when they wrote on the margins of their maps: "Here there be dragons." The season is long overdue to shine some light into these realms and separate at least tentative facts from the limitless folklore.

One of many areas needing more study and clarification is that of the so-called "legal highs," those plants said to be psychedelic, but which the Inquisition has not yet placed on its Schedule-1 list of forbidden fruits. I am excluding from this category the "quasi-legal" psychedelics such as morning glories and San Pedro cactus; while these are not illegal to *grow,* they do contain scheduled substances which are illegal to *swallow.* In any case, we have already discussed them as well as the ayahuasca analogue plants, none of which have been declared illegal as of this writing. (If it were possible to sort all this out rationally, it would take a googolplex of lawyers and clowns to accomplish!)

This chapter is devoted to the more common minor psychedelics, plants which have a shamanic tradition or are rumored to produce some sort of alteration of consciousness.

Figure 13-1
Salvia divinorum, or "diviner's mint."

SALVIA DIVINORUM

The species name of this plant from the mint family, *divinorum,* means "of the diviners" — diviner's mint. It is native only to a few square miles in Mexico where it is used by the Mazatec Indians (the tribe that reintroduced psilocybian mushrooms to the world) in their shamanic curing rites. I once attended a seminar where a Mazatecan curandera, or

"wise woman," spoke at length about her use of this plant. I don't know how much was lost in the translation (she spoke no English), but it was clear that she regarded the *hojas de la Pastora* ("leaves of the shepherdess") with reverence and respect.

What is interesting about *S. divinorum* is that it is botanically regarded as a cultigen, that is, a plant which has evolved into its present form via human rather than natural selection. It supposedly no longer grows in the wild and its seeds are said to be sterile; *Salvia divinorum* may only be propagated by cuttings. The Mazatecan shamans grow their own plants by this method in remote and hidden locations. In keeping with the perennial aura of confusion surrounding almost all psychedelics, there is some evidence (inconclusive as yet, of course) that *S. divinorum* may be able to set viable seed, and not be a true cultigen after all. Whether this is true or not, outside of Mazatecan Mexico the plant is a relatively exotic greenhouse botanical which fortunately *is* easy to start from cuttings.

In practicing their art, the Mazatecan shamans rely on a hierarchy of three hallucinogenic plants: *Salvia divinorum, Rivea corymbosa* (morning glory seeds), and *Psilocybe cubensis* (the sacred mushroom). Each apprentice curer is introduced to the hierarchy in progressive steps:

The process begins by taking successively increasing doses of *S. divinorum* for a number of times to become acquainted with the "way to Heaven." Next comes mastery of the morning glory *(Rivea corymbosa)*... seeds and finally one learns to use the sacred mushrooms... [S. *divinorum]* is, pharmacologically, the weakest of the three hallucinogenic plants. Following its ingestion the Virgin Mary is supposed to speak to the individual, but only in absolute quiet and darkness... Don Alejandro told the investigators that the *Salvia,* the morning glory seeds and the mushrooms each told their own *historia* (story or history) and *[S. divinorum]* was the best teacher of the ways of curing, as one learned the most from it... Although reportedly only weakly psychotropic, the *Salvia* infusion will induce powerful visions under the appropriate conditions... Mastering *S. divinorum* and learning to use the morning glory seeds before employing the mushrooms probably makes an apprenticeship much less traumatic than it would be by use of the

fungi alone, in addition to giving the future shaman wider insights into the varieties of hallucinogenic experiences.[1]

The active principle in *S. divinorum,* present in the leaves of the plant, remains unidentified. To date no one has been able to isolate an explicit hallucinogen, though there is some evidence that it may be a terpine rather than an alkaloid. This extraction difficulty is apparently due to the extreme instability of the catalyst after the leaves have been harvested. Although these are said to be viable for a day or two, any infusion made from them loses its potency in a matter of hours. In my own experience, leaves which were frozen immediately after harvest, then later thawed and made into an infusion produced no discernible effect, so apparently freezing doesn't preserve the active principle.

Dosage recommendations for *Salvia divinorum* leaves range from five pairs of leaves (i.e., ten leaves) to 120 pairs of leaves, 240 leaves. (Whether it is mushrooms or the leaves of *S. divinorum,* the Mazatecan curers ritually prescribe them in *pairs.)* Twenty-five pairs (50 leaves) is probably an average dose, though one would need one huge shrub or several smaller ones to be able to harvest that many leaves without stripping the mother plants. Since leaves vary in size, a more consistent measurement is by weight —100 grams of material should be sufficient to provide a psychedelic experience if one is there to be provided. (My single experience with this plant was inconclusive.)

The trip is generally regarded as extremely subtle. After chewing the leaves or swallowing their infusion, one sits quietly in a darkened room. The visions will not manifest under less sensitive circumstances and are often described as analogous to the first stages of mushroom intoxication — swirling colors, etc. Some experiences are more interesting than others; as in any psychedelic projection into mind-space, much depends on the consciousness of the subject:

As the shaman spoke, Valdes (who had only experienced a few brief visions which he hadn't described) saw a black sky with brightly colored objects floating in it. He suddenly found himself speeding toward one and actually felt he was accelerating through space past the rest. The light turned out to be a Mazatec village similar to that of the curandero.

Valdes saw it from above, as if he were on a hill. Shapes, like kaleidoscopic pillars of smoke, were at the sides of some of the houses. Then he was suddenly back in space, receding away from the vision... [Later] he found himself standing in a bizarre, colored landscape talking to a man who was either shaking or holding on to his hand. Next to them was something that resembled the skeleton of a giant stick-model airplane made from rainbow colored inner tubing. The "reality" of what he was seeing amazed him.[2]

Fresh, unrooted *Salvia divinorum* cuttings are available from specialty nurseries for about thirty-five dollars each. They are relatively easy to get started if you exactly duplicate their rather unique growing conditions. Once you get a large plant going, you can take more cuttings and get dozens more started.

Transplant deeper than prior level. Very easy to grow lushly, but needs certain conditions. Do not let them freeze (they can regrow from base if not too severe), nor let them suffer too much sun or heat. Ideal range cool to warm and not too cool at that, like 50s to high 60s. Dry air is bad and you'll know it immediately, as the leaves dry from the edges in and drop. Especially when air is warm (or hot) and dry. Full sun is not recommended either. 50 to 80% shade is good. Watering is the most important factor, they must be getting regular, ample water. Pretend they are back home in the high mountains where, although it never frosts, it never is warm either, and it rains daily. The shaded streambed where the plant grows has rather cold water and the air is nearly 100% humidity and cool. The plants, and especially the leaves, really like to be misted or "rained" on regularly, even continually if they could. So remember that. Indoors, they love being in a bright bathroom and can hardly wait for you to take your shower with them, or at least give them one, each day. And not too hot (warm is OK). Root space is the deciding factor on health and size. They love lots of root room, the more the better. They sometimes look diseased and weird inexplicably, but usually repotting is all they needed. Use black, composty, rich soil with a third builder's (river) sand to mimic that streambed in the Mazatec

Sierra's forest understory. Feed them with fish emulsion or similar liquid fertilizer now and then. Ours have an entire area of the greenhouse with all the free space of raised beds to root around in and they love it. A fog nozzle comes on for a minute five times each day, so they stay moist enough. We still need to water the bed soil itself every week or so in summer. They reach overhead and bend at the top of the greenhouse (10') and we have a rope cordoning in the area so the branches don't bend down too far. They flower in December. In the severest winter freeze here yet, we were shocked to see them frozen solid, their own juices frozen and bursting the stems open from top to base. They thawed to a black mush, but came back in spring like never before.[3]

I have grown *S. divinorum* successfully in a gravel-filled hydroponic tank. Until the cat jumped up on it and snapped it off at the stem, I had the beginnings of a very large and healthy bush.

COIEUS SPECIES

Wasson has reported that his Mazatecan informants told him that *Coleus,* the common house-plant and a cousin to *S. divinorum,* was also used by curers for hallucinogenic purposes. This has been repeated several times in the literature. Some correspondents tell me that Coleus is not psychoactive; others tell me that it is. Since I've not tried it, I can't say one way or the other. (After a while one loses one's enthusiasm for experimenting with large amounts of bitter, emetic leaves, especially when less ambiguous psychotropic plants are so easily available!) Here's a report from a shaman who should know:

The curandero also had several horticultural specimens of *Coleus* spp. growing near his house. Wasson has reported that the Mazatecs believe Coleus to be a medicinal or hallucinogenic herb closely related to S. *divinorum* (Wasson, 1962). However Don Alejandro said the plants were not medicinal and his daughter had bought them at the market because they were pretty.[4]

ACORUS CALAMUS

Acorus calamus, ("Calamus root") is a semi-aquatic plant that resembles a cross between a tall, skinny Iris and a cattail. It is also known as Sweet Flag, Sweet Sedge or Rat Root, and grows in both the Old and New Worlds. *Calamus* has long been used in herbal medicine to cure everything from bronchitis to vertigo. Much of what is written about this plant has an unfortunate tone of hearsay to it, one author quoting another. Certain Indian tribes "are said" to give the root to their horses in the form of a snuff to make them win races; other tribes chew about ten inches of root when they need an amphetamine-like stamina for long treks across the tundra.

Sweet Flag root contains asarone, a precursor of TMA-2, a phenethylamine which is reputedly 18 times more potent than mescaline. This fact is undoubtedly the source of its rather uncertain reputation as a drug — no one seems certain whether it is a stimulant, a sedative, a hallucinogen or even all three at once. (I've never encountered anyone who actually ate any.) There is evidence that the North American subspecies may be deficient in asarone; certainly, the DEA isn't losing any sleep over trying to control Calamus ingestion.

Suggestions that North American Indians may have taken *Acorus calamus* in a ritual context, are frequently accompanied by statements that this plant has sedative properties due to its asarone fraction. Unfortunately, such statements are based on studies with samples from India. There is considerable evidence that a substantial asarone fraction cannot be expected in diploid plants of North America, but only in triploid and tetraploid specimens of the Old World.[5]

I have a very large and healthy specimen of *A. calamus* now growing in hydroponic culture; being aquatic or semi-aquatic, it thrives in this moist environment. I've never ingested any, since I'm not at all convinced that it is hallucinogenic, and am not willing to sacrifice my beautiful plant to find out.

HEIMIA SALICIFOLIA

This plant was called "Sinicuiche" by the Aztecs and is still used by Mexican shamans as a trance-divination catalyst. I did not personally experience any of its reputed effects, but this could have been a dose-related phenomenon rather than a defect in the substance itself. Ten grams of fresh leaves is considered by some authors as a starting dose. Were I to try it again, I'd go to fifteen.

Heimia: An interesting and still poorly understood Mexican hallucinogen is the lythraceous *Heimia salicifolia,* known by its Aztec name *sinicuichi.* This narcotic is an interesting auditory hallucinogen, but it does not induce visual hallucinations. The leaves, slightly wilted, are crushed in water, and the juice is set in the sun to ferment. The resulting drink is mildly intoxicating, causing giddiness, drowsy euphoria, a darkening of the surroundings, a shrinking of the world around, altered time and space perception, forgetfulness, auditory hallucinations and removal from a state of reality. Sounds seem to come distorted from a great distance. The natives hold sinicuichi to be sacred, endowed with supernatural powers: that it helps them recall vividly events of many years earlier, that it permits them even to remember prenatal events. Five quinolizidine alkaloids have been found in *Heimia salicifolia.* The major psychoactive alkaloid appears to be cryogenine, which has been shown experimentally to "mimic qualitatively and semi-qualitatively the action of the total alkaloid extract" of the plant.[6]

Sinicuiche seeds are available from the specialty plant outlets and in my experience are very easy to sprout and grow; seed viability of the batch I planted last year must have been close to one-hundred percent. I wound up with more *H. salicifolia* plants than I knew what to do with. This species is highly sensitive to underwatering; even an hour or two of dryness causes it to wilt dangerously. It also needs lots of root space and becomes pot-bound very quickly.

CALEA ZACHATECHICHI

Although it is apparently used throughout Mexico as an herbal folk medicine, only one tribe is known to use this plant for dream divination purposes:

[Calea zachatechichi], an inconspicuous shrub ranging from Mexico to Costa Rica, is a recently discovered hallucinogen that seems to be used only by the Chontals of Oaxaca. They take it to "clarify the senses" and to enable them to communicate verbally with the spirit world. From earliest times, the plant's intensely bitter taste (zachatechichi is the Aztec word meaning "bitter grass") has made it a favorite folk medicine for fevers, nausea, and other complaints. After drinking a tea made from the shrub's crushed dried leaves, an Indian lies down in a quiet place and smokes a cigarette made of the dried leaves. He knows that he has had enough when he feels drowsy and hears his own pulse and heartbeat. Recent studies indicate the presence of an unidentified alkaloid that may be responsible for the auditory hallucinations.[7]

I note with amusement the observation that it is this plant's extremely bitter taste which recommends it as an herbal remedy, the rationale being, I suppose, that if it tastes bad enough, it has to be effective! In my experience, this is a complete *non sequitur*. I have ingested far too many nasty-tasting plants that had no effect at all other than to make me sick.

To date, I have been unable to sprout *c. zachate-chichi* seeds, and several correspondents report similar difficulties. I now have two potted specimens which were given to me by a friend. These are still too small to harvest any leaves, so I have not actually tested this plant's reputed psychotropic qualities. However, there is some hard data that suggests that it has definite potential as a dream catalyst:

The characteristic EEG slowness and the increased reaction times of subjects treated with both extracts suggested that zacatechichi may contain hypnotic compounds.... These results support the idea that zacatechichi extracts, particularly the methanol fraction, contain compounds with activity equivalent to sub-hypnotic diazepam doses.... Significantly more dreams... were reported after the methanol extract.

Similarly, the number of dreams reported during naps was significantly higher following the administration of the plant extracts than with diazepam... The number of subjects that did not remember dreaming was always greater after placebo and diazepam administration and, conversely, the individuals that reported more than one dream per session were always the ones treated with zacatechichi extracts.... With the methanol extract more colors during dreaming were mentioned. These results show that zacatechichi administration appears to enhance the number and/or recollection of dreams during sleeping periods... All this suggests that *Calea zacatechichi* induces episodes of lively hypnagogic imagery during SWS stage I of sleep.[8]

Those engaged in serious dream work will immediately recognize the value of any substance which might enhance their nocturnal forays into mind-space. This is a natural way to enter the imaginal realm without having to endure the arduous side effects of the more potent psychedelics. It is worth observing that anyone who has finally mastered how to access and control their lucid dreams would likely find hallucinogens redundant.

EXOTIC SOURCES OF DMT AND HARMALINE

There are many foreign plants, most of them tropical, which contain, or are said to contain, DMT or harmala alkaloids. These are offered for sale from various specialty outlets. *Psychotria viridis* (a bush) and *Banisteriopsis caapi* (a large liana) are the two classical ingredients in jungle ayahuasca, but other species are also available. I will not list them here because I have no experience with them and it is my understanding that they require the kind of specialized care which is not a practical option for most North American growers. In any case, the alkaloids they contain are more easily obtainable from domestic plants which have already been described herein.

AMANITA MUSCARIA

Next to Datura, there is probably more general fascination with *Amanita muscaria,* the so-called "fly agaric" mushroom, than any other non-scheduled hallucinogen. The mythological mist surrounding this fungi is so thick that probably nobody knows where the truth lies, even as they trample it underfoot in the fog.

Perhaps the major myth (which, maddeningly, may be accurate under certain circumstances) is that *A. muscaria* is a deadly poison — to ingest one is almost "certain death." On the other end of the continuum is the hypothesis that this was the fabled Soma praised in the Aryan Vedas, those ancient hymns of adulation for an unknown plant hallucinogen ("Soma") which quickened the religious impulse in primitive humanity and kicked off two of the world's major religions, Zoroastrianism and Hinduism. Between these two positions, deadly poison vs. religious catalyst, lies a vast grey area of fact and speculation. The following information is reasonably accurate:

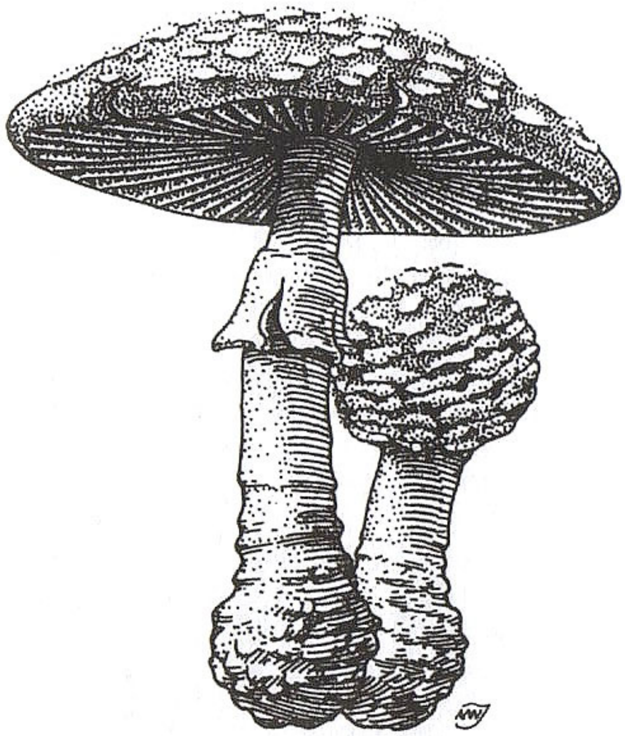


Figure 13-2
***Amanita muscaria**, the "fly agaric" mushroom.*

This red mushroom with its white spots (the very archetype for a "mushroom" in Western culture), is native to the Northern latitudes of planet Earth. There are old reports that it was used ritually by Siberian shamans, though I am uncertain of any modern observations of this. Part of the mystique surrounding this fungi is the curious observation that you can get high by drinking the urine of someone who has eaten it. It grows only in the wild, usually associated with birch trees, and cannot be cultivated. Much of the conflicting data on *A. muscaria* stems from the extreme variability of individual specimens — potency depends upon soil conditions, moisture, weather and genetic makeup, i.e., strain or subspecies (of which there are at least six). The time of harvest is also important:

We have found, according to the data reported in many texts, that the most important variable is the time of the season when the mushroom is picked. The most powerful mushrooms were picked in the middle of August when the season [was] beginning. In the mushrooms picked in September the narcotic and physical effects were predominant whereas in August the "visionary" and psychedelic effects were more highlighted.... The amount of drug changes from 1-3 mushrooms in August to 4-5 mushrooms in the middle of September. But even with the higher amount the experience is not the same: in September the physical symptom of nausea is more marked and less the narcotic and visionary experience.... I think that the most powerful quality of the *Amanita muscaria* is the sense of silent talking to oneself; it's a kind of internal dialogue where a person has the feeling of important revelation about his life, a feeling which is maintained for a long time after the experience. I think that this mushroom could have a lot to teach us about ourselves.[9]

The above observations were made in Europe, so there may be differences in specimens harvested in North America. The lethal dosage of *A. muscaria* in Europe, as estimated in the quoted article, is something like five kilograms of fresh material, far more than anyone would be likely to ingest. Here is a hallucinogenic dosage recommendation from an anonymous Xeroxed article mailed to me by a correspondent:

Suggested dosage for one adult: 10 to 15 grams dried material. Make sure the cap to stem ratio is kept at about three to one. Preparation: Pulverize dried mushroom material into a fine powder. A small electric spice mill works best. Mix with one cup of water in a small cook pot. Heat slowly to about 190 [F] degrees. Do not boil. Steep like tea. Keep at 190 for at least one-half hour, using a candy thermometer to monitor temperature, and stirring occasionally-Let cool enough to consume. Consume solids and all. Straining out solids is not advised. That is why it is best to have a fine powder. The elixir should be about the consistency of tomato soup... Using soda pop as a chaser works fairly well, but beware of caffeine unless you are used to it. Special caution! This is not

to be mixed with alcohol... Abstain [from alcohol] for 48 hours preceding the experiment.[10]

Repeating anonymous instructions like this for a substance which I have never taken myself is questionable. I do it because of the perennial interest in *Amanita muscaria* and because I trust the correspondent who sent it to me. It also has a ring of authenticity to it. (Litigiously-disposed readers are advised to re-read the disclaimer at the front of this book.) The article goes on to say that it is part of the experience to sleep for a while after ingestion:

From one-half hour to one and one-half hours after consumption of *[Amanita muscaria]* you will notice a particular nausea and drowsiness. Here is where it is important to relax. Do not fight it. Relaxing and sleeping will relieve the nausea. Lie down and sleep it off for one to two hours... This stage is critical for the transformation of crude chemical into a purer refined soma. Upon awakening and rising, you will understand, and enjoy, as a caterpillar metamorphosizing [sic] into a butterfly.[11]

The following is a description of an Amanita trip sent to me by a different correspondent:

The three participants were **A**, **B** and **C**. **D** was the sitter. Although she had never sat or taken a psychedelic, she was a nurse, so it was felt to be safe. The mushrooms had been picked about a week before and were dried by a combination of sun, oven and fan. They were completely dry by the time they were taken. Each subject took just under half a cup of finely powdered chopped mushrooms blended with grape juice and consumed at 10:10. They all took some capsules of algae afterwards.

At 10:20 C felt nauseated. **A** and **B** went for a walk. By 10:30 **A** and **B** were feeling a little woozy, **A** more than **B**. **A** then lay down next to **C** who had just vomited and drank her emesis. **C** got up again to vomit at 10:40 but couldn't stand the idea of drinking it again. **A** is feeling definitely altered, queasy and nauseated. When his breathing was

shallow he felt sicker: when he breathed deeply and slowly it was not too bad. **B** was moving around a lot saying if he moved he didn't feel as nauseated.

A is checking out, feeling like he is skimming an out of body experience: "so ready to leave, just about gone, just about gone." He is hearing things in the room and starting to salivate a lot. The three of them had all prayed and meditated for a few minutes before ingestion, discussing hopes, fears, feelings, most definitely a feeling of gratitude, awe, fear, reverence: the world's oldest psychedelic.

Then followed a two hour bizarre twilight state. **C** was out, not moving, rapid shallow breathing. (She is generally quite hyperkinetic.) **D** was most worried about her. **C** was not sweating or drooling. **A** and B were occasionally twitching, with a gleam of perspiration over them and saliva pouring or dribbling rapidly out of their mouths. B was apparently less out of it and more present, wondering if he had taken enough. **A** did not know how much time had passed. He thought he was either awake or dreaming dreams that were totally life-like: dreamed in total awareness. He was only dimly or not at all aware of the music. They were all lying 6 to 8 feet away from 4 foot high speakers that were on very loud.

A threw off his blanket, he was both hot and sweaty and cold and chilled. According to **D**., none of them showed any visible chills. **A** was very stoned, feeling like it was unlike anything he had felt before. He said: "psychedelic is too broad-based a term: it's too all-encompassing, too much assumption that it was a psychedelic. It was as if everything was exactly the same but totally unfamiliar. But it all looked like I knew it to be." They all went outside laughing, wondering: "What's going on?" They couldn't tell if they were intoxicated or not. **B** didn't think so, neither did **C**, but A did. All he could note was the shadows of the grass and plants looked different, but in retrospect he said: "It was this world about a shade or quantum level off somehow in an eerie, profound, unmistakable way."

They were ataxic and staggered. They were all quite happy. There was minimal visual phenomena occurring. They all felt quite loving toward each other but didn't feel concerned about sharing it, unlike MDMA. They all felt like they were in it together, but it was clearly an effort to say much more than a few clipped or short sentences. They were too intoxicated to carry on a conversation. It was as if they were all passing each other on the sea. **B** and **C** were hungry and not that intoxicated. They were all cold and hot. All three of them had gotten up off the floor at the same time sweating and drooling with mushroom stench everywhere. A had some gas and cramps. He belched and passed gas and felt better quickly, particularly after **D** convinced him to drink some hot miso soup and take a shower.

B and **C** smoked a bowl of marijuana and then they both got much more intoxicated. It appeared as if **A** was about thirty minutes ahead of **B** and **C**. Originally B had asked when all three arose at 1:00 PM if **A** wanted more. He said, "No way." Later **B** agreed he couldn't have had any more once he finally came on. Music was incredibly intense, maybe the most intense ever. Every note with its own rise, plateau, peak and fall, along with every melody with its component parts. **A** felt, then physically became each note: his body was every note. "Perfect," he said, listening to the end of a New Age tape. There was almost too much energy surging through him with the music — he wanted to scream to release some of it. There was a feeling of predicting the future and feeling the past — somehow the telescoping of time. His thoughts about the future appeared to be a statement about what's happening in the present, or what occurred in the past as the same. He said, "I feel the past and the future as presently true." Some future plans appeared to be automatically happening, as a matter of course.

There was an apperception of being taught: "I feel an incredibly old, earthen, Druidic, arctic-summer, Siberian tree-spirit kind of entity." It was powerful, old, wise and slow-moving: sepias and browns and pale greens: "Here I am — can you, will you ask of me?" It seemed very

patient — the mushroom was gentle and beneficent, but too old to really empathize with: a benign fairy god; a supreme-being everywhere immovable. A felt he could put his hand through it without difficulty.

They all felt a little delirious at times. They felt that taking less would help one remember better; although the experience wasn't too much, it approached that at times. They all laid down until 4:00 PM and got up feeling well. They took a fifteen minute walk, a little wobbly, with the same weird double sense of reality as normal, yet unmistakably different. By 5:30 they all felt great, hungry, able to converse, giggling a lot. They smoked some marijuana in the hot tub. All felt remarkably refreshed — no hangover at all: energetic, calm, happy, blessed, astounded.

C verbalized something true for each of them: as soon as one observed that something was odd or stoned or trippy, it changed: turned into a flatter, less voluptuous organic experience. The mushroom did not want you to become a detached observer. It was a lucid dream, but once it became truly lucid (knowing you were in it) it was no longer a dream. It was very odd for such a powerful effect to be so subtly determined. They all slept well with no unusual dreams. The next day they all commented that their vision seemed clearer.[12]

For some paranormal insights into Amanita, see Puharich, Andrija (1974), *The Sacred Mushroom,* Doubleday, Garden City, NY., in which psychics report some rather bizarre experiences with these mushrooms — communication with discarnate entities describing ancient Egyptian religious rites, etc.

TABERNANTHE IBOGA

Tabernanthe iboga, a shrub native to equatorial Africa, is the source of iboga and ibogaine, reputedly two of the most potent psychedelics on planet Earth. These drugs are all but impossible to obtain in the U.S., having been put on Schedule I many years ago. (This despite the fact

that neither of them have ever been a drug of abuse in this country, or even available to be abused.) Most people have never heard of *Tabernanthe iboga;* it is included here because of its reputation both as a shamanic catalyst and, ironically, a promising cure for substance abuse.

Certain African tribes use root extracts of *T. iboga* in their male puberty rites. This is a once-in-a-lifetime ingestion of the alkaloid to reveal to these candidates for adulthood the reality of the imaginal realm. Manhood itself is equated with this knowledge:

> Iboga brings about the *visual, tactile* and *auditory* certainty of the irrefutable existence of the beyond. Through his spiritually immutable substance, man belongs on two planes of existence with which he blends, knowing not where birth and death begin. Physical death loses all meaning because it is nothing but a new life, another existence. "It is Iboga that conditions the several existences"... Iboga does away with the notion of time, the *present, past and future blend into one...* Through the absorption of iboga, man returns to the birthplace whence he came... The candiate has become an initiate by discovering the Bwiti (ancestral spirits) in another reality, that is, in *the other life stemming at once from physical death and initiatory death.* Through the waking dream, he catches a glimpse, in the *present, past and future* of his own being, of man, immutable in his spiritual essence, and living on two planes of existence... As a [member of the Mitsogho tribe], he will only make this journey twice: *during the initiation and on the day of his death.* It is out of the question for him to take iboga again under the same conditions. (Emphasis in original)[13]

If ritual usage of this alkaloid actually creates an irrefutable experience of the imaginal realm, it follows that those who ingest it will have their lives changed in significant ways. Here is evidence that the administration of ibogaine is able to cure heroin addiction:

> A single treatment with ibogaine or ibogaine hydrochloride administered orally at a dosage ranging from 6 mg/kg to 19 mg/kg

made it possible to interrupt the use of heroin for at least six months.[14]

Since it is against the law to even investigate such claims, whether this is just another example of psychedelic mythology remains to be seen. When legal sanctions prevent the ascertainment of facts of nature, reason demands a re-evaluation of the assumptions informing our laws.

NOTES

1. Valdes, L., et. al. (1983). "Ethnopharmacology of Ska Maria Pastora (Salvia Divinorum, Epling and Jativa-M.)." *Journal of Ethnopharmacology, 7,* 287-312.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Anonymous (circa 1992). *Cultivation Details for Exotic Plants,* Of The Jungle, P.O. Box 1801, Se-bastopol, CA 95473.
4. Valdes, *op. cit.*
5. deSmet, P. (no date). *Ritual Enemas and Snuffs in the Americas,* Rosetta Folios, Berkeley, p. 124.
6. Schultes, R.E., "The New World Indians and Their Hallucinogenic Plants," *7th Annual Lecture Honoring Dr. Laura L. Barnes,* Nov. 12,1969.
7. Schultes, R.E. (1976). *Hallucinogenic Plants,* Golden Press, NY, p. 152.
8. Mayagoitia, L., et al. (1986). "Psychopharma-cologic Analysis of an Alleged Oneirogenic Plant: *Calea Zacatechichi" — Journal of Ethnopharmacology,* pp. 18, 229-243.
9. Festi, F. & Bianchi, A. (1992). "Amanita mus-caria," *integration,* No. 2/3, bilwis-verlag. d-8729 knetzgau/ eschenau, p. 79.
10. Anonymous (no date). "The revised anonymous Amanita muscaria eaters' hand-paper," *Mushroom Times* (pub. data missing) p. 5.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Anonymous (1993). Personal communication to author.
13. Goutarel, R., (1993). "Pharmacodynamics and therapeutic applications of Iboga and Ibogaine," *Psychedelic Monographs and Essays* #6, pp. 71-111.
14. *Ibid.,* p. 95.

Chapter Fourteen
EXTRACTION PROCEDURES

Shamanism in Peru is like European alchemy in that it utilized psychic involvement in matter, but European alchemy became entrapped in a fascination with metals and purified elements. Psychedelic shamanism more happily centered its attention on living matter, specifically plants, where alkaloids and other bio-dynamic constituents congenial to the primate nervous system are encountered.[1]

In most aboriginal cultures, the extraction process for psychedelic plants is quite simple; as often as not, the shaman just boils down the raw materials in a pot and then drinks the concentrated brew. We come from a different tradition with different beliefs and expectations. For one thing, our civilized" tastes have been refined to the point where we have difficulty in ingesting anything we perceive as bitter or repulsive— this,unfortunately, applies to most psychoactive botanicals. I know of no plant hallucinogen that actually tastes good, which I would want to eat even if it weren't a psychedelic. Westerners generally prefer pure compounds in the form of pills or capsules that can be easily swallowed, an efficiency which makes up in acceleration what it loses in verisimilitude.

As much as I empathize with not wanting to ingest horrible tasting substances that make you feel sick, I have to endorse the more "organic" position of shamanic alchemy . Much of the meaningful content of psychedelic shamanism comes from one's relationship with the substance before it is ingested; from planting the seed to experiencing the energy evoked by the plant involves a long series of profound and patient interactions. Such an intense rapport with a substance makes "substance abuse" all but impossible.

Nevertheless, the taste of some substances is so noxious that any extraction process that can mitigate the worst effects is certainly not an unreasonable transaction to make with the plant. The extraction procedure itself can be incorporated into the overall meditation. Th is is the rationale behind alchemy.

There are many different drug recipes in print. Unfortunately, these are usually written by authors who make some unwarranted assumptions about their readership; not everyone interested in psychedelic extraction procedures is necessarily familiar with the language and principles of organic chemistry. In such cases, one is blindly following instructions that one does not fully understand. This is the antithesis of alchemy and an almost guaranteed way to make mistakes. Although complex laboratory procedures should never be attempted by amateurs (the synthesis of LSD, for example), there are many simple recipes that can be safely performed by any reasonably patient and intelligent person.

BASIC **PRINCIPLES** ***OF ALKALOID EXTRACTION***

For me anyway, it isn't enough to just follow a recipe; I want to comprehend each operation — what it does, and why it is necessary. To

have that kind of understanding, some familiarity with basic chemistry is essential. What follows is information written, I hope, in language any non-chemist can understand. A good place to start is with the concept of pH.

pH is a numerical value assigned to the relative acidity or alkalinity of a substance, expressed on a scale of 0 to 14. A substance with a low pH is extremely acidic — like the stuff found in automobile batteries; material with a high pH is extremely basic or alkaline — like ammonia or lye, for example. (For our purposes, the terms "basic" and "alkaline" are synonymous.) It follows then, that a pH of 7 would be neutral — neither acidic nor alkaline. The standard for pH neutrality is pure water.

All the possible degrees of acidity or alkalinity are found in the range between zero and fourteen on the pH scale. This is crucial for us to know, since it is a fact of nature that *to make alkaloids soluble in water we must first make them acidic*. Conversely, for *them to be soluble in an organic solvent, such as ether, we must make them basic or alkaline*. Most of the psychoactive substances we are interested in extracting are called "alkaloids," compounds numerically above 7 in pH. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* defines the word for us:

Alkaloid: any of a very large group of organic bases containing nitrogen and usually oxygen that occur especially in seed plants for the most part in the form of salts with acids..., most of the bases being colorless and well crystallized, bitter tasting, complex in structure with at least one nitrogen atom in a ring..., and optically and biologically active, many of the bases or their salts being used as drugs (as morphine and codeine).

Here are the definitions for three other terms we need to understand:

Acid: a compound (as hydrochloric acid, sulfuric acid, or benzoic acid) capable of reacting with a base to form a salt.

Salt: any of a class of compounds typified by common salt... that may be formed by the reaction of acids with bases.

Base: a compound (as lime, ammonia, a caustic alkali, or an alkaloid)

capable of reacting with an acid to form a salt either with or without the elimination of water.

The object of chemical extraction is to separate the psychoactive alkaloids from the plant material. This is done by first simmering the crushed plant in an acidified water bath, which converts the alkaloids into their salt form. After filtration, the plant pulp may be discarded. To extract the alkaloids from the water, the remaining liquid is made basic and an organic solvent is added. The alkaloids will migrate into this solvent, which can then be drawn off and poured into a shallow dish.The solvent will quickly evaporate, leaving behind the alkaloids in pure crystalline form (you should be so lucky!), or more commonly, as a relatively impure gummy compound.

A REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLE

If we wish to extract the alkaloids present in *Phalaris arundinacea,* for example, we would first pulverize the grass clippings as much as possible. One technique that helps to rupture the cellular structure of any plant material is to put it in the freezer overnight, remove it the next day, thaw it, put it in the freezer again, then remove and thaw it again. After two or three such cycles it will usually be pretty mushy and easily minced in a blender. In the case of *Phalaris* grass, which is limber and difficult to pulverize, it should be placed in the blender while still frozen stiff, so that the blender blades can more easily chop it up.

To the resulting mash we add enough water to make a pourable soup. Next we add an acid — not too much (later on we'll turn the solution basic, so there's no advantage in taking the pH level too low) — but just enough to bring the pH down to about 5.

There are many kinds of easily obtainable acids. White vinegar, lemon juice, or the acid used by photographers for their stop bath solutions are all forms of acetic acid. The latter can be purchased at any photography store, though it is far more expensive than the distilled white vinegar sold in supermarkets. The more potent sulfuric and hydrochloric acids are extremely corrosive liquids, and should be either avoided or handled with great care.

The pH is checked with a special pH paper usually available in drug stores. It turns various colors depending upon the pH of the substance it is dipped in. This color is then matched to a reference chart on the container to determine the exact numerical pH value of the substance being tested.

The acid reacts with the alkaloids in the plant material and converts them into a salt. A good way to facilitate this reaction is to simmer the acidified soup in a slow cooker overnight; leave the lid on, as we don't want any liquid to evaporate. It may take two or three such operations to get all of the alkaloids into solution. Next, we strain the plant matter first through cheesecloth, then through a paper coffee filter. The bulk roughage may now be discarded because the alkaloids we seek have migrated into the aqueous solution.

At this point, we add a small percentage (10 or 15%) of a defatting solvent such as methylene chloride, ether, chloroform, or naphtha. Naphtha is easily available in the form of Coleman fuel or lighter fluid. The objective here is to remove oils and fats which are also in the solution — they will migrate into the solvent. Shake up the mixture and put it aside long enough to separate into two layers, one aqueous, the other solvent. If you've ever made vinegar and oil salad dressing, you've already observed the principle involved.

While not absolutely essential, a separatory funnel is very useful for this operation. This is a simple laboratory apparatus consisting of a tapered glass or plastic container with a tap at the bottom and a stoppered opening at the top. The two liquids are poured in the top (the bottom faucet is closed, of course); the container is corked and shaken vigorously to mix its contents. It is then set aside until the fluids separate into two distinct layers. After shaking and separating a few more times, the tap is opened to allow the lower stratum to drain into a container. Just before the descending upper fraction reaches the faucet, it is closed off.

One has now reseparated the two original liquids, but they have been mixed for a while, and the substances we seek to exclude (in this case, the fats and oils) have migrated to the solvent layer. Depending on the solvent, this may be above or below the aqueous stratum — ether will

go to the top, for example, while methyline chloride sinks to the bottom.

If you do not have a separatory funnel, the fractions can also be divided by carefully siphoning off either layer. In this instance, we now discard the solvent (along with the unwanted oils and fats) and turn our attention to the remaining aqueous solution which contains the alkaloids.

The next step is to add a base to our solution. One often used in extraction formulas is ammonium hydroxide, a liquid. If this is unobtainable you can substitute regular household lye crystals (sold as drain cleaner) dissolved in water to a high concentration. (Lye is a dangerous chemical. Read and follow all of the instructions on the can.) This fluid is added in small increments to the aqueous solution, shaking the mixture each time, then testing it until eventually the pH reaches 9 or 10. Be patient. It usually takes many careful applications before the pH is where you want it. If you're in too much of a hurry, it is easy to make the solution far more alkaline than necessary.

Chemically, adding a base to the solution has the effect of "unhooking" the salt and transforming the alkaloids into their "free base" form. They are now no longer a salt, and hence no longer soluble in water, thus making them accessible to extraction by one of the organic solvents mentioned above. Most of these chemicals are not particularly easy to obtain, but ether is readily available in cans of engine starting fluid, sold in auto supply stores. (To get liquid ether out of an aerosol starting fluid can, spray it down a ten or twelve-inch length of three-quarter-inch PVC pipe into a jar; the ether condenses on the sides of the pipe and drips into the jar, while the inert propellant dissipates into the atmosphere. Obviously, you don't do this in an enclosed area or anywhere near flame or sparks.) Immediately put a lid on the jar to prevent undue evaporation of the liquid ether.

A ratio of 10 percent of the aqueous solution should be enough solvent for each extraction. The easiest way to estimate this is to visualize where the 10% line is on your container of aqueous solution, then add that amount of solvent to the whole, increasing the volume to 110%. (A super accurate measurement is not necessary.) The container (if you

don't have a separatory funnel, a large Macon jar works well) must be kept tightly closed so that the solvent won't evaporate from the solution.

Four extractions are made to ensure that all of the alkaloids are removed. These are done at one 24-hour, and then at three weekly intervals. The solvent layer will soon take on a darker tint, usually yellowish or reddish-brown. This indicates the presence of alkaloids as they slowly move out of the aqueous solution. It will take almost a month to get most of them, and the mixture should be shaken at least twice a day to ensure that all of the alkaloid molecules come into contact with the solvent. At each weekly extraction carefully separate this from the aqueous solution by either of the methods mentioned above. Save these solvent fractions and combine them in one container. Each time add fresh solvent to the aqueous solution until the extraction series is complete.

The last step is to pour the combined solvent fractions into a shallow baking dish or pan and allow it all to evaporate in an open space free from flame or sparks. The residue remaining after evaporation contains the alkaloids, and may be put into gelatin capsules. If it is unduly gummy, one may add small amounts of ordinary flour to the gum until it thickens enough to handle easily.

It is important to remember that all of the plant alkaloids will be removed, not just the psychoactive ones we are looking for. These may include some toxic compounds, and one should *always* have a good idea of what a plant contains and in what percentages before ingesting any extraction taken from it. *Arundo donax* for example, while containing DMT, also contains several other alkaloids which caused an allergic reaction in me when I ingested its extract. These unwanted compounds can be removed, but the process requires more knowledge of chemistry than I've learned to date.

TENTATIVE DOSAGE RECOMMENDATIONS

In the case of the example, *Phalaris arundinacea,* the extracted

alkaloid is DMT and one might start out with an oral dose of about fifty milligrams of this in combination with about a gram of *Peganum harmala* extract (see formula below). These should be adjusted upward or downward until the desired effects are obtained.

At a recent conference on hallucinogens, an internationally known authority recommended a ratio of 141 mg of harmine to 35 mg of DMT. This admixture is based on plant extractions done in a laboratory by a professional chemist. My simple extractions aren't nearly that purified, so anyone experimenting with these combinations will have to do some interpolation based on their own experience. Suffice it to say that the officially recommended ratios of *pure chemical compounds* are: 1.5 milligrams of harmine/harmaline per kilogram of body weight; and .5 milligrams of DMT per kilogram of body weight. That translates to a ratio of 102:34 for a 150 pound individual. These are not dangerous doses, so one can safely round it off to 150 mg harmine to 50 mg DMT. Simple plant extractions are unlikely to be this pure, so adjustments will probably have to be made. (For example, my homemade harmala extract isn't effective in amounts less than one gram.)

In the Amazon, of course, shamans don't use milligram scales or extraction solvents and their raw materials vary in potency from place to place and plant to plant. It is not surprising, therefore, that their ayahuasca brews vary considerably from shaman to shaman and batch to batch. When working with plants as opposed to refined chemical molecules there is a fair amount of latitude for experimentation.

PEGANUM HARMALA EXTRACTION FORMULA

Since *Peganum harmala* seeds provide an easily extracted concentrate of harmala alkaloids, and since this extract, combined with orally ingested DMT or psilocybin evokes an extremely potent psychedelic experience, the following formula is offered. Of all of my various experiments in this field, this one has been the most rewarding. It is so simple that anyone can perform it successfully without specialized equipment. (It doesn't even require de-fatting or extraction with an organic solvent!) Indeed, if one were to forget every other plant in this

book and concentrate solely on "mushroom ayahuasca," one would easily facilitate a lifetime's worth of self-exploration.

First, pulverize a measured amount of *Peganum harmala* seeds to a fine powder. Assume that one safe dose of harmala *extract* is derived from three grams of *seeds*. Therefore, weigh your raw material so that the extract may be apportioned from a 3:1 ratio — six grams of seed equals two doses of extract, nine grams equals three doses, etc. I use a *West Bend* 6505 mini food chopper, which quickly turns the dry seeds to powder. Place the seed powder into an electric crockpot with a 30% acetic acid solution and simmer overnight with the lid on. (Concentrated lemon juice is an inexpensive source of acetic acid, and you can simplify the measurements by mixing one part lemon juice with two parts of water, a 33% solution.) After 12 hours of simmering at about 215 degrees, strain the extract through a paper coffee filter; save the liquid, and simmer the mash as before in fresh lemon juice solvent. The second extraction is often quite spectacular, an electric yellow solution with a fluorescent green tinge to it — obviously potent stuff! Strain again, discard the mash, and evaporate the combined liquids in the crockpot (lid off) down to a dry residue. Monitor the operation at the end so that it doesn't burn in the pot. Scrape off the extract with a razor blade; it should be a slightly sticky, reddish-brown crystalline stuff. Weigh this essence, divide into the predetermined number of portions and place in gelatin capsules. In the above dose this extract is not in itself hallucinogenic, but it will greatly potentiate any tryptamine hallucinogen you take with it. (Two grams of *Psilocybe cubensis* come on like five, etc.)

At the risk of being redundant, I repeat the following:

WARNING: Never combine harmala alkaloids with peyote (mescaline), Ecstasy (MDMA), or any amphetamine type substance; monitor your diet and drug intake for 48 hours before and after ingestion — this is an MAO inhibitor, and not to be treated carelessly. See the chapter on ayahuasca and its analogues for further information.

SPAGYRIC E*XTRACTION PROCEDURES*

Spagyric formulas are based upon the principles of alchemy. The term is defined as follows:

In the word *spagyria* two Greek words are hidden: *spao,* to draw out, to divide; and *ageiro,* to gather, to bind, to join. These two concepts form the foundation of every genuine alchemical work, hence the oft-quoted phrase: *"Solve et coagula, et habebis magisterium!"* ("Dissolve and bind, and you will have the magistery").[2]

A "magistry," or "masterpiece" is the end result of an alchemical operation in which a whole (such as a plant) is broken down into its component parts. These are purified by various means and then recombined. It is this recombination into a *new whole* which distinguishes alchemical procedure from a simple chemical extraction.

The rationale behind spagyric theory resonates with what we know about whole systems. Although the procedure separates one ingredient from another, it maintains some connection with the pattern of the source material. The principle of wholeness is preserved while an alteration of the component parts is effected. This results in a new compound to be sure, but it is one which has not been severed from the integrity of its parent substance.

A *chemical* (as opposed to an alchemical) extraction procedure distills pure compounds from complex wholes but throws away what it doesn't want. Done on an industrial scale, this separation of "buy-products" from "byproducts" results in what is called "toxic waste." An *alchemical* extraction procedure on the other hand, differentiates what it seeks, but knows that the completeness of the natural compound is violated unless its altered parts are recombined. Alchemy postulates a kind of "chemical ecology" in which any fabricated substance must preserve an energetic connection with the archetype from which it was derived.

Although this sounds mystical, if we accept the shamanic hypothesis of imaginal realms arranged in energetic hierarchies, the logic for maintaining these patterns of wholeness makes perfect sense. It also explains the "sorcerer's apprentice" quality of "purified" molecules turned

loose on a world which has not evolved natural processes to deal with them. Analysis without subsequent synthesis is a process divorced from wholeness — the rationale of the cancer cell. This is not the place to extrapolate these insights to the contemporary world situation, but the principle is worth further contemplation.

Briefly, a spagyric procedure can be described as a three-step process: "Take it apart. Purify it. Put it back together." Here it is in somewhat more detail:

Alchemists have a unique way of separating out the respective components of an herb, then purifying and recombining them in the final alcoholic elixir. Simply expressed, a spagyric tincture, as it is called, is prepared by making a standard alcoholic extract in which the "mark" or solid residue, which normally is discarded, is calcined to a fine white ash, ground into a powder, and returned to the strained liquid extract. The liquid is then carefully redistilled, leaving the residue of ash at the bottom. Such alchemical preparations represent a secret or lost art of herbal preparation that may contain keys to more direct means of extracting the life-force from plants.[3]

One begins a spagyric procedure by pulverizing the plant material. For the sake of illustration, we'll assume that we are extracting San Pedro cactus. After freezing and thawing a few times, the mushy chunks of cactus are cut into small pieces and blen-derized. The resulting slime is diluted with enough water to make it easily pourable. This is spread out to dry on cookie sheets covered with plastic wrap. When the material has hardened completely it may be quickly reduced to powder in a food grinder. Weigh out 100 grams of powder per dose and combine this in a large Mason jar with 500 ml (about a pint) of ethyl alcohol, available as "Everclear" in most states. One-hundred proof vodka will also suffice. Shake this mixture a couple of times every day for two months. The alkaloids are being extracted into the alcohol.

The next step is to filter this through a piece of cloth and then through a paper coffee filter. Re-cap the liquid tincture and set it aside. Save the filtrate and spread it out to dry. When it becomes a

dehydrated powder again, place it in a frying pan and heat until it begins to burn. If possible do this outside, since this creates a lot of smoke. The idea is to "calcinate" the powder to a *white* ash. First it will turn to black charcoal, but when kept on the fire this eventually burns down to a fine white powder. Grind the white ash as fine as possible and add it back to the alcoholic tincture. Shake this mixture twice daily for one or two weeks, then filter again (this time the filtrate may be discarded) and evaporate the tincture to its final dry residue. This is what is ingested.

According to alchemical theory we have purified the waste product in fire by reducing it to its lowest common denominator (ash), and then recombined it with its extracted tincture. Energetically, although greatly modified from the original, it is a whole entity again. In the example of San Pedro cactus, we have established a middle ground between the extremes of drinking cactus juice (the way they do it in Peru) or swallowing a capsule of pure mescaline (the way they do it in Berkeley).

The spagyric preparation "opens" the plant and by its own process liberates stronger curative powers. It is in principle synergistic, and less interested in isolated pharmacologically active principles. We cannot do justice to the methodology of spagyrics if we measure it according to the standards of analytical chemistry or pharmacology, even if these sciences can explain in their own way part of the effects of spagyric remedies.... In the case of many of these conceptions and ideas we are dealing with analogies, which, however, prove to be extremely valuable, just as in traditional acupuncture.[4]

shamanism for the West. If nothing else, we have acknowledged responsibility for our "waste" by purifying and subsequently recycling it back into the product. Both alchemy and shamanism are concerned with the process of wedding consciousness (mind-space) in dynamic balance with matter (space-mind) to attain an expanded reality called the *unus mundus*. The immersion of awareness into matter through the discipline of spagyric theory applied to psychedelic plants is a promising move in this direction.

NOTES

1. McKenna, T. (1989). "Among Ayahuasquera" in C. Ratsch, ed. *Gateway to Inner Space,* Prism Press, Great Britain, p. 191.
2. Junius, M. (1985). *Practical Handbook of Plant Alchemy,* Inner Traditions, NY, p. 1.
3. Tierra, M. (1988). *Planetary Herbology,* Lotus Press, Santa Fe, p. 62.
4. Junius, *op. cit.,* p. 3.

Chapter Fifteen
SOME THOUGHTS ON TECHNIQUE

Probably, the effectiveness of ritual is independent of its content. I do not think it matters much what rules one makes for using drugs as long as one makes rules. If a rationale is needed for these rules, any rationale will do as long as it is consistent with prevailing beliefs. In Indian societies ritual is often explained in terms of respect for the god or spirit supposed to dwell within the magic plant. In American society, ritual may be understood as "good social form." In either case, the principle works to protect users from the negative potential of drugs.[1]

Each of us entered space/time via a passionate polarization of opposites in which DNA molecules split, merged and then wove themselves into a dimensional interface between consciousness and matter. The seemingly ethereal wedded to the seemingly dense. Each of us was subsequently thrust into the context of something resembling a family, a culture and a history on a planet where natural forces are coordinated enough to sustain life. Although warped by these templates, each of us is unique and possesses a greater or lesser capacity to modify our given essence.

Or so we believe anyway. When confronted with the unknown, consciousness fashions belief and then embraces it unto death, because without its rationalized structure we are vulnerable to an in- tolerable abyss of incomprehension. Yet, something beneath the surface of

normal awareness knows that beyond these thought-engendered sureties, the Mystery still exists, and that any naked confrontation with it is usually an experience in pure terror. So we spend our lives promoting and defending our convictions and avoiding as much as possible any dealings with that which transcends comfortable comprehension.

Psychedelic self-exploration is the psychological equivalent of quantum physics, the subjective en- counter between belief and the Mystery, where belief is challenged until nothing is what we thought it was: Where old premises are destroyed and new ones are begotten. Not everyone is interested in exploring these realms. Those with large investments in the status quo seem willing to use any means available to prevent others from going there, while others are all but driven to go there regardless of consequences. This is the stress that fuels the evolution of consciousness.

It is important to realize that belief is an essential tool in this process. Our beliefs may be totally erroneous, but their structure is "real" and this is what enables us to match our expectations with our experience. It is always stressful when expectation does not match up with experience, but we take it in gradual increments, modifying our hypotheses as we go -- the world slowly goes from flat to round; Newton's physics becomes Einstein's; yesterday's dogma turns into today's superstition. The illusion of knowing enables us to handle our fear of the unknown and provides a structure for making choices. It may be nothing but the configuration of an illusion, but it is something to live by and buys us time to get it straight in the end -- or so we can choose to believe.

In the Western world disease is perceived largely as caused by pathogens ("germs"), chemical imbalances, or genetic predisposition. In the world of shamanism, disease is usually regarded as the direct result of some kind of sorcery -- the evil thoughts of others. In some cultures there is no room for any other etiology. If you get sick, someone is doing a number on you, and only the shaman can find out who and remove the curse.

The following quotations give a feeling for these beliefs as expressed within the Pan-Amazonian faith of ayahuasca shamanism. For example,

Mal deojo, the evil eye, is an affliction with a somewhat ambiguous origin, since it can apparently be spread without conscious intent:

The cause and to some extent the cure of this disease of the evil eye are also unconscious. The person whose eyes are evil and whose look causes the often fatal gastroenteric illness is unaware of the power of that look. It is an unconscious power and an unpremeditated act, perhaps the quintessence of envy -- envidia taking on a life of its own, over and beyond intentionality.[2]

Envida, envy, is apparently a more consciously administered disease. If you catch this one, some- body is deliberately trying to make you sick:

People can be envious of just about anything, so it seems. And the envious person is dangerous, so aroused by envy that she or he will try to kill through magical means -- *chonta* (blowpipe darts in the case of the lowland Indians); *magia* and *capacho* (in the case of the highland Sibundoy Indians); *magia* and *sal* and *maleficio* (in the case of the civilized castes and classes -- the blacks and the whites).[3]

Ayahuasca shamanism is currently being romanticized in the West. Confused and dismayed by a physics of abstraction which divides matter into subatomic particles and then tells us that this "ultimate reality" obeys no laws we can recognize as rational, we are quick to turn to the equally egregious beliefs of the prescientific world. The question is: can we really accept the Shamanic hypotheses of an alien culture? Here, for example, is a composite description of what might be regarded as a representative South American ayahuasca curing session:

A local Indian man moved over to Pedro's suffering side. Pedro had been vomiting.
"It's violent, this remedy," he said between retches.
The man began his tale of woe.
"My woman has escaped from me... my son is sick... the home is filled with evil... I don't know what to do..."

"Damn!" exclaimed Pedro with empathy and pain as he pressed his face back into his hands.

This went on all night. People got up to shit and vomit and came back to the fire. It was cold away from it.
They talked mostly of the prevention and cure of sorcery... Sexto, the man from the lake, described his past three years of suffering. He paused.

"Evil wind, tnal aires," concluded a woman in a confident tone.

Sexto fixed her with a beady stare. "No!... Sorcery!" he said.

"Pure sal, pure sorcery," chimed a young man seated in the corner, "for sure!"...

One by one the women brought their children to be cured of espanto ("fear"). The babies cried. The shaman cried louder still, the song flung hard at the wide night sky and the dark lake below.[4]

The evil eye, envy and fear are not generally recognized as causes of disease in Western medicine. We do not easily believe in such diagnoses and usually label them as naive superstitions. Yet, shamans routinely cure individuals who are genuinely physically ill by working within this frame of reference. In a denotative sense, and quite apart from whatever else it might be, this is psychosomatic medicine, pure and simple, and seems to have more to do with psychiatry than "general practice" -- or does it? Where do you draw the line between mind and matter?
Belief per se seems to have a certain potency of its own. Perhaps there is a template in the imaginal realm which can structure any parameter assigned to it and within that configuration create effects in this dimension. In other words, if enough energy is given to a belief it may be possible for it to become a minor force of nature able to employ other, more generic forces in its service.
It is one of my beliefs that no one who has had a full-blown DMT trip

could ever regard any belief as either totally true or totally false. In fact, what we label consensus reality is only provisionally "real" from this point of view. Most of us have heard the Buddhist tenet that "Life is an illusion." The DMT experience fully ratifies this assertion. (Actually, "partial reality" may be a more accurate term than "illusion.") One of the most plausible explanations for how this can be is that "reality" in this dimension is constructed by whichever neurotransmitter is currently being processed by your brain:

When one smokes or injects a substance like DMT or 5- MeO-DMT, one experiences a situ- ation where the brain sees, or chemically reacts to something that resembles its usual neurotransmitters, but is just one or two [atoms] away. So, it allows these mutated chemicals to take the same spot it usually reserves for serotonin. Both being close enough molecularly and functionally to replace serotonin, the impulses that usually get organized by serotonin now get organized by the DMT or DMT analogs... If the brain functions in a qualitatively... identical way... [with] either serotonin or DMT, then we must assume that if one is hallucinatory, then the other might be also. In this case what we call "normal" reality may be 5-HT (serotonin) hallucination and what is undergone by schizophrenics is DMT hallucination. Or, that neither are hallucinatory in effect, but simply differing "lenses" that reveal two very real, but slightly mis-aligned realities.[5]

In dimensional terms, this hypothesis asserts that the realm you perceive is dependent upon any one of a series of closely analogous molecular keys. The "normal" key for this dimension is serotonin, but if you wish to enter the imaginal realms, similar chemicals will open them up to your awareness. It is significant and interesting that the most powerful of the psychedelic drugs are all very similar in structure to serotonin! Somehow I find something wryly comforting in the assertion: "Life is just a serotonin hallucination!"

Which sparks the question: What then is real?

What lies outside the matrix of this multiverse of partial realities which in themselves seem to be "beliefs" on a larger scale than human

imagination can conceive -- the beliefs of the gods, perhaps?

Since such questions can only be rhetorical it is more profitable to concentrate on the structure of belief as a tool for encountering the Mystery. It follows that it doesn't really matter what you believe, so long as you are willing to use its structure as a reference point for processing your experience.

Without this reference point there is no context for discrimination, nothing to modify or build upon. Consequently, the more flexible your structure, the easier you'll be able to accommodate manifestations of the unknown.

The concept of "hypothesis" comes to mind: Ideally, a working hypothesis has built within it a potential for modification, even continuous modification. Beliefs, on the other hand, tend to be problematic precisely because they are usually fixed and resistant to self-correction. An hypothesis assumes that we don't know, but are trying to learn. A belief insists on the comforting illusions of certitude. In other words, to be able to stay profitably engaged with the Mystery, "The Adept must be ready for the utter destruction of his point of view on any subject, and even that of his innate conception of the forms and laws of thought."[6]

The best catalyst I know of for training the ego to be comfortable with this point of view is DMT, the Shamanic drug par excellence.

The traditional use of psychedelic plants almost always involves ritual. Ritual is the stylized (which is to say, structured) expression of belief. It provides a "sacred" space within which the Mystery can manifest, a template for its expression in terms understandable to humans. It therefore doesn't matter what the ritual is, as long as what emerges from it is comprehensible to you. Terence McKenna has observed this phenomenon:

I even have conversations in the hallucinogenic spaces where I say, "Show me what you are for yourself."

And then it starts like an organ tone that begins to lift velvet drapery. After about forty-five seconds of that I say, "That's enough of what you are for yourself.

Let's go back to dancing mice and little elves and, you know, the

happy, nice stuff!
This is scaring the socks off me!"... It always cloaks itself.
It's not an entirely honest encounter. It knows that you actually couldn't handle it...
It can accept as many projections as we can put onto it.
It literally is beyond the power of human imagining, so whatever image we lay onto it, it can take that and give it manifestation.
The mice, the elves, the alien abductors. (Emphasis mine)[7]

On the other hand, just any old belief will not work if you aren't able to grant it at least the status of a probability, a working hypothesis. I have found my most useful hypotheses within the structure of what I believe are three analogous templates for human consciousness, the Shamanic worldview, the Western Mystery Tradition and Analytic (Jungian) Psychology. Whether these are entirely accurate doesn't matter. One must begin somewhere. Beginning nowhere is a sure-fire way to freak out in mind-space.

One useful meditation technique is to relax, close one's eyes and visualize a landscape with a cave or some kind of entrance into the earth. (One merely sets the scene. The unconscious psyche will provide the rest of the imagery. If done properly one be- comes a participant-observer in a kind of inner movie.) In the imagination one enters the cave and follows it to another landscape, either the upper or the lower world of the Shamanic imaginal realm. There one looks for a power animal which will then lead one to whatever it is that one needs to know. Jung used a process very similar to this and called it "active imagination." In other esoteric traditions the same idea is applied within symbolic parameters specific to each belief system. Kabbalists work with the Tree of Life glyph, for example. Several years ago, a book was published which described a very effective way to use the symbols of the Tarot deck in this way.[8]

In other words, whatever symbol-complex you can assign some probability ("belief) to will work. Often all you need is an aesthetic appreciation for the system concerned.

"Active Imagination," then, is a proven technique for entering the imaginal realm, with or without psychedelics. To give a flavor of how it

works, here is a description of a Shamanic visualization I did using a Plus-2 dose of San Pedro cactus. I modified the structure of the meditation to fit my immediate reality. Instead of a cave, I imagined entering the screen of my word processor:

Went into computer terminal, down a short stairway (10 steps) to the entrance of a huge tunnel.
About halfway into this passageway I turned left into a smaller tunnel. This twisted, turned and rapidly shrank into something the size of a gopher hole.
I emerged from this (I'm \ now gopher size) onto a desert landscape studded with many San Pedro cacti.
A rabbit came(larger than me) and I climbed onto its back.
The rabbit took me to the trunk of a huge San Pedro cactus with a door in its base.
I entered this doorway and found myself in a kind of lobby. There was an elevator which I took up many floors to an observation platform on the "roof."
This was a large empty room surrounded by plate-glass windows overlookingthe desert and thousands of San Pedro cacti growing in all directions.
Then I became aware of a door opening behind me into some kind of an office.
A prim, officious secretary emerged, saying: "Mr. Pedro will see you now."
I entered the office to see "St. Peter" seated behind a huge desk (a la big business executive).
He was surrounded by white light, and I couldn't see his features clearly. He affably offered me a chair opposite the desk. I asked him the proper way to use San Pedro cactus. He gave me three initial guidelines.
(I got the impression that there were more, but that these were for starters):

1. Be sincere. (That means no frivolous use).
2. Don't be afraid -- no matter what happens during the trip it is for

your inner growth and thus part of the program.
3. Be alert to "road signs" pointing you in new directions.
We shook hands and I returned the way I came.
A very interesting visualization -- quite creative and surprising. There's an autonomous sense of humor in my psyche somewhere:
SaintPeter (San Pedro) as a CEO promoting a "product!" Symbolically it works -- my book is "selling" the Shamanic use of psychedelics.

If done properly, these "inner guide" meditations should have a feeling of surprise, delight and wonder about them -- you'll have no idea at all about what is coming next. This is a kind of waking dream, a gentle penetration into the imaginal realm which (for me) is only possible on very light doses.
Higher doses are usually too powerful for me to be able to "set the stage" with the initial image, but this may be a learned skill. (A straight partner leading you into a visualization could be a useful technique here.) In my experience, the higher doses organize their own reality. Here is a description of such a trip:

Ate approx. 2.5 gm Psilocybin mushrooms.
Came on in about an hour. Spent the night in the tipi with a small fire to keep away the mosquitoes.
Lots of visual patterns: incredibly intricate swirling blue and blue-green arabesques with closed eyes.
Then saw writhing red and blue snakes in great detail: every scale, every pattern of coloration, just as if they were real snakes!
No fear or anything like that -- they were quite beautiful. S. and I did some personal inner work --
I automatically began "channeling" what I interpreted as a higher portion of my greater psyche.
This "entity" ("James") was a teacher and worked firmly but patiently with some little girl aspect of S.
The issue seemed to be related to another lifetime in which she underwent an initiation to become a tribal "medicine woman."
She was apparently a white captive raised by the tribe since early childhood but recognized by the Shamanic elders as one of the "chosen

ones."
The issue was that of a young girl's fear of growing up and taking responsibility for her adult role in the tribe. This was somehow related to current issues in S.'s life -- in my view, her unwillingness to use her will or structure her power.
"James" tried to get her to move forward in time to when she was a truly powerful shaman, but this did not take place and some part of her chose to remain in the willful, "bratty" little girl persona.. The trip peaked at about two hours and I began losing "James" he would come and go at longer intervals, and finally disappeared.

Insights: What are called "recreational" doses easily allow one to move into inner space to do work.
I'll have to try it at higher doses also, but intuition tells me the lower doses are more manageable in this regard.
One could develop a viable psychotherapeutic method this wa-
neo-shamanism!

The images and metaphors that came up during this experience must be regarded as provisional;
something in the psyches of both of us created the unfolding scenario and we flowed with it. I don't know or care whether the scenes were historically accurate. They were simply interesting, and revealed a great deal about the inner dynamics being played out between us at that phase of our relationship. The entity "James" (I have gone by "Jim" my entire life -- no one who knows me ever calls me James) was experienced as an "other," something related to me, but not "me" in any normal everyday sense. I was deeply impressed with "his" patient wisdom, this not being something I normally have in overabundance. For me, still higher doses sweep me along with their energy; I go where they choose to take me, and I hold on until it's over. Here's an example of one of those trips:

Too stoned to keep track of time. Subjective effects of only two grams of mushroom plus

one gram of harmala extract easily equal to previous five gram trips. Felt very weak, but could force myself to move with enough will. Moire patterns everywhere, but colors not nearly as vivid as previous trips. Everywhere I looked I saw complex patterns --everything was inte grated with its surroundings in one meaningful overall gestalt. The wind blowing the leaves on the trees outside was an unambiguous dance in harmony with the flow of the cosmos. Persian rug patterns in everything. Physically quite cold -- stayed near the stove, though S. said the room was too hot for her. Everything impossibly complex and intricate -- African trade bead patterns. Sounds seem distant and altered. Click-sticks on Australian Aborigine tape sound far away with beat slowed down to a surrealistic level -- somehow portentous. (Looking back on this, it seems like a clue to Shamanic usage: Listen to the beat, and follow it.) Transient nausea, but not too bad -- came in waves and then went away -- easily handled. Very difficult to get into Shamanic focus -- drugs overwhelmed my ability to concentrate. I wish I had a teacher.

The overall trip seemed subjectively much longer than the 2.5 gram experience in June.

Had the feeling that my consciousness was being permanently altered. Everything I looked at seemed made up of tiny human skulls -- like those on my Nepalese necklace.

No bad experiences to speak of -- every time something started to get "weird" I just "let go of it" and it went away. After the peak, as I slowly came down, it was easier to shamanize.

Concept of "Layers and Overlays" -- this is difficult to describe, but I felt I was seeing dimensions of reality

as layers superimposed upon one another.

For example, I could look at S. and see her various essences, then she would speak from her ego, and I'd be immediately aware that her ego is the least part of her -- an almost trivial overlay.

I got intimations that she has forces within her which protect her from harm -- guardians, so to speak. Vibes are that if she didn't have these (they seem to be "external") protectors, she would have died a long time ago. She doesn't take care of her body --lung area very weak due to cigarettes: I could see into her chest, but had to look away: I couldn't deal with it. (Some shaman!) She's only alive because of the external/internal forces that maintain her. She truly has some "guardian angels," though I didn't actually see them -- only intimated their presence.

A profoundly wonderful experience,though I have only scratched the surface.

It must be emphasized here how easy it would be to take these experiences at face value and turn them into hard-core beliefs. This danger is inherent in any intense perception, but psychedelic states of consciousness especially lend themselves to it. The structure of belief is essential, but the content must always be provisional. Think metaphorically, think hypothetically, but never fall into the trap of dogma.

No one is immune. Recall the early sixties and the kind of enthusiastic proselytizing that was going on. In the more extreme quarters, psychedelics were the answer to almost every problem on the planet. The words enthusiasm and entheogen have identical roots. Each refers to the emergence of "entities" (theos = god) from the imaginal realm via the conscious ego. These "entities" take us over and we become the uncritical slaves of en-theos-iasm. We find ourselves being ridden by some unbalanced force from hyperspace. (Unbalanced, because not compensated by critical differentiation.) Nothing in the multiverse is

that pure -- balance is essential.

Therefore, any hypothetical construct which recognizes and values the concept of balance is useful when entering the imaginal realm. An excellent example of this is found in the Peruvian San Pedro cults where the idea is actually embodied within the structure of the shaman's mesa, or ceremonial altar. The left side of the mesa is associated with the dark forces -- sickness, sorcery, etc. The right side of the altar is consigned to the healing, life-giving powers; and the center is conceived as a balance between them.

These altars are usually very large, containing a huge assemblage of objects having symbolic significance for the shaman. There is a consistent association of the left side of the altar with archaeological artifacts (potsherds, bones, etc.), and things relating to animals, snakes and deer, for example.

The right side is reserved for religious icons, the images, statues and other paraphernalia from the vast pantheon of Catholic saints. The arrangement clearly suggests the conflict between the ancient, pre-Columbian gods and Christianity, a duality which has dominated these cultures since the Spanish Conquest. It is within this symbolic structure, this "belief system," that the shaman is empowered to engage the forces of the imaginal realm:

[The shaman] Jose explained that he must master the forces of both the left and the right and he never spoke of the left side as a locus of evil powers; for him, it was the field of life-threatening powers, with no explicitly stated moral evaluation... Jose described the ritual sessions as dangerous, potentially fatal encounters with life-threatening powers. He even told of other curers, with less powerful altars and careless ritual habits, who had lost their lives when they confronted potent sorcerers. On the other hand, Jose also commented on the aesthetic and pleasurable elements in the sessions.

When I asked why he enjoyed the experience, he said, "Because it's mine, it's my work. Because I see beautiful, powerful things. Because at the end I cure people."[9]

In addition to having a frame of reference, a belief structure, for his

forays into hyperspace, this shaman has formulated an "attitude" -- the concept of "play" -- which provides elbow room to maneuver within that belief system. This, it seems to me, is analogous to the best interpretation of "hypothesis," a stance elastic enough to accommodate whatever the Mystery may throw at you:

From Jose's perspective, there is no contradiction between the threatening and the pleasurable elements in his ritual. This is clearest, I think, in his use of the noun and verb forms of the word "play" or "game." In reference to the ritual as a whole, as well as to the mesa itself, Jose would say, "mi juego, (my game)." His ritual chant included phrases like "vengo jugando (I come playing)," "sigo jugando (I go on playing)," and "vamos jugando (we go playing)".... For Jose, therefore, there is a play or game quality central to the experience of the ritual... The role of the mesa in the game is intelligible if it is remembered that Jose's encounter with dangerous forces occurs in the context of a San Pedro-induced vision experience... The altar helps Jose to master his visions by giving them both form and meaning.... Over time, it became clear that for Jose the ability to "make sensible" the images and sensations presented to him during his drug experience depends in large part on the fact that he has represented much of that imagery in concrete form through mesa objects. There are some very strong indications that mesa symbols are concrete representations of hallucinatory imagery...
The shaman uses a mesa artifact to convey something he has "seen" in his visionary state... All of this evidence supports the conclusion that mesa artifacts are very closely linked to mescaline-induced hallucinations and that they serve to anchor visualizations in such a way as to permit their application to the achievement of specific ends...
The mesa, as it is understood by the shaman, is a gameboard, a symbolic paradigm against which the ritual is played. It represents the struggle between life-taking and life-giving forces, between left and right. But this

struggle, this opposition, becomes a passage, a resolution, by the shaman's re-affirmation of mastery over both the left and the right. Like shamans throughout the New World, Jose is a balancer in the contest between opposing forces. For Jose, the game of the ritual, which the mesa presents in concrete symbols, is a balancing act performed by an individual who stands above the contest by mastering both sides.[10]

Conceptualization is a function of the imagination, an activity which takes place in the imaginal realm. It is what assumes shape when we set the stage for the "inner guide" meditation described previously. For Westerners entering hyperspace with psychedelic drugs from a non-shamanic culture deeply influenced by scientific materialism, some kind of a sufficiently elastic structure (hypothesis) is essential. The above concepts from Peru (however one may choose to modify them for personal use) are highly recommended. Perhaps these ideas may be placed in a more familiar context via a line from Robert Frost:

But yield who will to their separation,
My object in living is to unite My
avocation and my vocation As my two
eyes make one in sight. Only where
love and need are one, And the work is
play for mortal stakes, Is the deed
ever really done For Heaven and the
future's sakes.[11]

Notes

1. Weil, A. (1972). The Natural Mind, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, p. 108.
2. Taussig, M. (1987). Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing, Univ. Chicago Press, Chicago, p. 172.
3. Ibid., p. 397.
4. Ibid., p. 251, passim.

5. Lyttle, T. (1985). "De Arte Alchemistica de hac re Altera Intelligenda," Psychozoic Press, Summer, #10.
6. Crowley, A. (1929, 1976). Magick in Theory and Practice, Dover, NY, p. 296.
7. McKenna, T. (Summer 1993). Green Egg interview.
8. Steinbrecher, E.C. (1978). The Inner Guide Meditation, Blue Feather Press, Santa Fe. (This book has gone through several printings and more than one publisher- it may still be in print.I recommend it highly.)
9. Joralemon,D.(1984)."Symbolic space and ritual time in a Peruvian healing ceremony,"*Ethnic Technology Notes* No.19,San Diego Museum of Man,p.7, *passim.*
10. Ibid., p. 7, passim.
11. Frost, R. (1964). "Two Tramps in Mud Time,"Complete Poems of Robert Frost, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, NY, p. 357.

AFTERWORD

For now, this book seems to be "complete," yet no one knows better than I how much more could be included -- the subject is inexhaustible. I would like to conclude with a few personal comments.

The subject of drug abuse is certain to be raised in the minds of some readers. No one who has ever visited a 12-step meeting could ever seriously claim that we do not have grave problems in this area.

Historically, substance abuse in stable cultures has been statistically insignificant. The fact that there may be no stable cultures left on the planet suggests that when substance abuse becomes pandemic? it transcends individual pathology and reflects a much deeper malaise. If average people are unable to realistically imagine a tomorrow better than today, substance abuse amounts to a vote of no confidence in the future. It is the symptom, and not the cause, of disintegrating social structures.

The psychedelic plants discussed in this book, are not generally drugs of abuse. Their principal use throughout history has been within Shamanic contexts, which is to say healing contexts. They are usually regarded as medicinal rather than escapist.

Only a culture too hysterical to be able to differentiate their transparent differences would lump all "drugs" into one category and then prohibit their use with punishments worse than those reserved for

murderers. Individuals who handle their personal affairs in that fashion usually wind up in mental hospitals. This approach is the exact antithesis of the Shamanic use of drugs: Whereas the mental patient is an "unsuccessful mystic" the shaman is a highly successful and efficient member of his community: he is one who is not controlled by his illness but can control it; generally his presence is imposing, his health and versatility excellent, his intelligence higher than that of his milieu... In general, shamans have nothing to do with sacrifices, nor with regular worship, their principal function being that of... experts and guides in the realm of cosmic dreams... Above all, the shaman is a mediator between "cosmic regions."[1]

Although this book hypothesizes consciousness based upon a Shamanic model of reality, I must state clearly that I do not consider myself a "shaman" in the usual sense of the word. I am not a curer, and have little interest in the subject of curing. I am interested in the Mystery of consciousness, and I use Shamanic substances and techniques to help me access states of awareness that are not easily available by other means. I do not believe that psychedelic drugs are anything more than useful catalysts for this transformation. The fetish which is often made over them is analogous to worshipping the finger that points at the moon.

If I knew how to bring waking awareness into my dreaming mind without drugs, this book probably never would have been written.

Whether plants "contain" spirits or entities is doubtful to me, but I'd be the last person to insist on the hypothesis that they don't. Quite simply, I do not know; I have had the DMT vision, and claim nothing beyond agnosticism. Paradoxically, this to me is the true meaning of Gnosis, to know that you don't know is to know at least one thing for certain.

Since my curiosity appears to be boundless, this isn't depressing or frightening as much as an incomparable challenge.

Concerning the entities of the imaginal realms: If I were asked to briefly summarize my current thinking about them, I would guess that they are denizens of spatial dimensions perpendicular to human consciousness; that there are "good guys" and "bad guys," and that it is very difficult from our position in space/time to differentiate between

the two; that it is an evolutionary choice to expand our awareness enough to meet these beings on their own turf and get to know them without abject subservience. This may be our initiation into transpersonal adulthood. For me, this is the only game in town worth playing because it is on the cutting edge of the Mystery, and anybody willing to explore his/her own psyche can play. A recent observation from my journal seems appropriate here:

"Yesterday I was out in the shop when the dogs barged in to vie for strokes.
It occurred to me that I must be as a god to them -- they are constantly competing for human attention, never seem to get enough, and will fight each other just to get more.
"There's nothing stopping these three large and powerful animals from living as free as the coyotes in the hills -- nothing stopping them, that is, except their 'belief that they need me to feed them.
"The relationship between humans and their gods seems little different. In our god-fawning, like dogs, we seem to be saying: 'Underestimate me until I believe you, but please occasionally feed me with the reassurance that my existence is not meaningless., I couldn't help but recall my 'years of exile,' when I was a dog for the god I imagined in my head, or who imagined me -- I'm not sure which: probably both.
"I would never treat a dog the way that god treated me, and eventually I rebelled and became a mad dog. Mad dog spelled backwards is 'god dam.
How many times a day do we say 'God damn'? It must be the most common epithet in the English language -- a phrase used so often that we cannot see its ironic deeper meaning. Are we truly damned by the gods to a cruel and demeaning servitude in return for an occasional condescending stroke?
Who feeds whom here?
"Any dog who has discovered his misplaced loyalty is a mad dog indeed. Maybe it's time to reverse the order and damn the gods

instead. Or at least grow up enough to declare our independence from their authority. The only thing keeping us from freedom is our belief that we need them to feed us.

"On reflection, it occurs to me that this is just the first step: A kind of arbitrary adolescent rebellion. We might save ourselves a whole lot of trouble by moving toward integration with these forces -- by immediately taking the second step and becoming gods ourselves."

This leads back to the hypothesis explored in the Foreword to this book, that the intentional use of psychedelics by enough people could bring about a shift in the collective unconsciousness of our species, a shift significant enough to resolve the deadly problems of our age. If so, it would be humanity's first conscious evolutionary choice. Are we wise enough to choose survival over extinction, or will the archons and demons of the imaginal realm continue to obscure our discrimination? How many of us have the will to make such a choice?

The appearance or emergence of the "explorer mutant" during a time of cult or paradigmatic crisis may well be an upper brain expression of a species survival reflex, reenergizing with hope and new possibilities at a time when tribal demoralization threatens all with resignation to death. Fatigue, hunger, depression, and anomie disappear as the group now in loving cooperation makes a renewed effort to survive, driven by the brain's religious reflex and its attendant metaphysical ideation.[2]

If the imaginal realm is real, then it is time to begin making it conscious. No longer the arcane pursuit of seers and mystics, the survival of our species may now depend on its capacity to live in the unus mundus. If this mutation is latent then conceivably it is contingent upon our choice to be- come its living catalyst. Such a choice is ultimately a no-lose proposition.

I shall close this book with a final quotation which sums up for me the entire raison d'etre for psychedelic self-exploration:

It now seems possible, by the use of the psychedelic tryptamines, to venture into the death state before we die and to accustom ourselves

to that state. This is the path of the shaman and the spiritual warrior. At death, when the transition is finally and irrevocably made, the psychedelic explorer will enter a realm he or she knows from previous experience, and will, hopefully, not be swept away by fear and ignorance.[3]

Jim DeKorne
August 14,1993

Notes

1. Kohsen, A. (1966). Book review of Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy (M. Eliade), in Psychedelic Review, No. 7, p. 118, passim.
2. Mandell, A. (Date?). "The neurochemistry of religious insight and ecstasy." (No publishing data on Xerox sheet.).
3. Meyer, P. (1993). "Discarnate entities induced by dimethyltryptamine (DMT)," Psychedelic Monographs and Essays, No. 6, Boynton Beach, FL, p. 56.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anonymous (no date). "The revised anonymous *Amanita muscaria* eaters' hand-paper," *Mushroom Times* (pub. data missing)

Anonymous (circa 1992). *Cultivation Details for Exotic Plants,* Of the Jungle, P.O. Box 1801, Sebastopol, CA 95473

Anonymous (c. 1990). "San Pedro cactus cutting care," Of the Jungle, P.O. Box 1801, Sebastopol, CA 95473

Appleseed, J. (pseudonym), (1993). "Ayahuasca analog experiences," *The Entheogen Review,* Vol. 2, No. 2, Summer Solstice

Bassuk, E.L., M.D., and Schoonover, S.C., M.D. (1977). *The Practitioner's Guide to Psychoactive Drugs,* Plenum, NY

Billings, R. (1989). *The Way of the Little Clowns,* Unpublished monograph

Blake, I. (Spring 1993). "A question of ethics," *Crash Collusion* #3, Austin, TX

Burroughs, W. & Ginsburg, A. (1963). *The Yage Letters,* City Lights, San Francisco

Castaneda, C. (1968). *The Teachings of Don Juan,* Ballantine, NY

"Chandogya Upanishad" (1957). *The Upanishads,* Mentor, NY

Clynes, M. (1978). *Sentics — the Touch of the Emotions,* Anchor-Doubleday, Garden City, NY

Crowley, A. (1976). *Magick in Theory and Practice,* Dover, NY

Danielou, A. (1966). "The influence of sound phenomena on human consciousness," *Psychedelic Review,* No. 7

deSmet, P. (no date). *Ritual Enemas and Snuffs in the Americas,* Rosetta Folios, Berkeley

Dobkin de Rios, M. (1990). *Hallucinogens: Cross-cultural Perspectives,* Prism Press, Dorset, England

Donner, F. (Nov./Dec. 1992). "Being in Dreaming," *Body Mind Spirit*

Estrada, A. (1981). *Maria Sabina: Her Life and Chants,* Ross-Erikson Inc., Santa Barbara

Evans-Wentz, W.Y. (1969). *Tibet's Great Yogi Mi-larapa,* Oxford University Press, NY

Festi, F. & Bianchi, A. (1992). *"Amanita muscaria," integration,* No. 2/3, bilwis-verlag. d-8729 knetzgau/eschenau

Fox, O. (1962). *Astral Projection: A Record of Out-of-the-Body Experiences,* University Books, New Hyde Park, NY

Freemantle, F., and Trungpa, C. (1975). *The Tibetan Book of the Dead,* Shambhala, Boston

Frost, R. (1964). "Two Tramps in Mud Time," *Complete Poems of Robert Frost,* Holt, Rinehart & Winston, NY

Furst, P. (1976). *Hallucinogens and Culture,* Chandler and Sharp, Novato, CA

Gorman, P. (Fall, 1992). "Journeys with ayahuasca, the vine of the little death," *Shaman's Drum*

Goutarel, R. (1993). "Pharmacodynamics and therapeutic applications of Iboga and Ibogaine," *Psychedelic*

Monographs and Essays #6

Gracie and Zarkov (1986). "An Indo-European plant teacher," *Notes From Underground, Number 10*

Grieve, M. (1971). *A Modern Herbal* (Vol. II), Dover, NY

Grof, S. (1975). *Realms of the Human Unconscious,* Viking, NY

Grubber, H. (1973). *Growing the Hallucinogens,* 20th Century Alchemist, P.O. Box 3684, Manhattan Beach, CA 90266

Halifax, J. (Autumn 1990). "The shaman's initiation," *Revision,* Vol. 13, No. 2

Halifax, J. (1990). *Shaman: The Wounded Healer,* Thames and Hudson, NY

Harner, M. (1980). *The Way of the Shaman,* Harper & Row, San Francisco

Harner, M., ed. (1973). *Hallucinogens and Shamanism,* Oxford University Press, London

Hatter (Pseudonym), (Summer, 1993). "A modest proposal," *The Entheogen Review,* Vol. 2, #2

Hawken, P. (1976). *The Magic of Findhorn,* Bantam, NY

Hesse, E. (1946). *Narcotics and Drug Addiction,* NY, Philosophical Library

Jonas, H. (1963). *The Gnostic Religion,* Beacon Press, Boston

Joralemon, D. (1984). "Symbolic space and ritual time in a Peruvian healing ceremony," *Ethnic Technology Notes,* No. 19, San Diego Museum of Man

Jung, C.G. (1959). *Aion,* Bollingen Series XX, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ

Jung, C.G. (1975). *Letters,* Vol. 1, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ

Junius, M. (1985). *Practical Handbook of Plant Alchemy,* Inner Traditions, NY

Kingsbury, J. M. (date?). *Deadly Harvest — a Guide to Common Poisonous Plants,* Holt, Rinehart and Winston, NY

Kohsen, A. (1966). Book review of *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (M. Eliade), in *Psychedelic Review,* No. 7

Lang, J. (Pseudonym), (1938). "The other side of hallucinations," *American journal of Psychiatry,* 94:1087-97

Leary, et al. (1964). *The Psychedelic Experience, a Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead,* University Books, New Hyde Park, NY

Lewis, W.H. & Elvin-Lewis, M.P.F. (1977). *Medical Botany,* Wiley-Interscience, NY

Lukoff, et al. (1990). "Transpersonal psychology research review: psychoactive substances and transpersonal states," *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology,* Vol. 22:2

Luna, Luis E., and Amaringo, Pablo. (1991). *Ayahuasca Visions, the Religious Iconography of a Peruvian Shaman,* North Atlantic Books, Berkeley

Lyttle, T. (Winter, 1983). "A close encounter with Belladonna, black sheep of the psychedelic world," *The Psychozoic Press,* #6

Lyttle, T. (Summer, 1985). "De Arte Alchemistica de hac re Altera Intelligenda," *Psychozoic Press,* #10

Lyttle, T. (circa 1987). "Drug Based Religions and Contemporary Drug Taking," *Journal of Drug Issues*

Lyttle, T. (1993). Review of *Ayahuasca Visions: the Religious Iconography of a Peruvian Shaman,* in *Psychedelic Monographs & Essays,* #6

Mack, J.E., M.D. (March/April 1993). "The 'Alien Abduction' Phenomenon," *Venture Imvard*

Mandell, A. (Date?). "The neurochemistry of relig-ous insight and ecstasy" (No publishing data on Xerox sheet.)

Mayagoitia, L., et al. (1986). "Psychopharmacologic Analysis of an Alleged Oneirogenic Plant: *Calea Zacatechichi," Journal of Ethnopharmacology,* pp. 18, 229-243

McGlashan, A. (1967). *The Savage and Beautiful Country,* Houghton Mifflin, Boston

McKenna, T. (1992). *Food of the Gods,* Bantam, NY

McKenna, T. (1991). *The Archaic Revival,* Harper, San Francisco

McKenna, T. (1989). "Among Ayahuasquera," *Gateway to Inner Space,* Prism, Great Britain

McKenna, T. (May, 1993). *Omni* Magazine

McKenna, T. (Summer, 1993). *Green Egg* Magazine

McLaughlin, S. (1979-80). "The relation between physical dimensions and higher consciousness," *The Journal of Altered States of Consciousness,* 5: 65-82

Meyer, P. (1993). "Apparent communication with discarnate entities induced by dimethyl-tryptamine (DMT)," *Psychedelic Monographs and Essays,* #6

Miller, R. (circa 1973). *The Magical and Ritual Use of Herbs,* O.A.K., 1421 N. 34th, Seattle, WA 98103

Miller, R. (Sept. 1988). "Homegrown Peyote," *High Times* Magazine

Modell, A. (1958). "The theoretical implication of hallucinatory experiences in schizophrenia," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association,* 6:442-480

Monroe, R. (1977). *Journeys Out of the Body,* Anchor/Doubleday, Garden City, NJ

Monroe, R. (1987). *Far Journeys,* Doubleday, NY

Moore, M. (1978). *Journeys into the Bright World,* Para Research, Rockport, MA

Naranjo, C and Ornstein, R. (1971). *On the Psychology of Meditation,* Viking, NY

Oss & Oeric (1976). *Psilocybin Magic Mushroom Grower's Guide,* And/Or Press, Berkeley

Ostolaza, C. (1984). *"Trichocereus Pachanoi* Br and R," *Cactus and Succulent Journal* (U.S.), Vol. 56

Peele, S. (1982). *Lepiota Peek* — a newly discovered hallucinogenic mushroom, Xerox sheet, Florida Mycology Research Center, Pensacola

Plowman, T. (December 1977). *"Brunfelsia* in Eth-nomedicine," *Botanical Museum Leaflets,* Harvard University, Vol. 25, No. 10

Polia, M. & Bianchi, A. (1991). "Ethnological evidences and cultural patterns of the use of

Trichocereus pachanoi B. R. among Peruvian curanderos," *integration No. 1,* Journal for mind moving plants and culture, Bilwis-verlag d-8729 knetzgau/ eschenau

Potterton, R. (September, 1992). "A criminal system of justice," *Playboy*

Ring, K. (1989). "Toward an imaginal interpretation of UFO Abductions," *Revision,* Vol. 11, No. 4

Robinson, J.M., ed. (1988). *The Nag Hammadi Library,* Harper & Row, San Francisco

Rucker, R. (1984). *The Fourth Dimension — Toward a Geometry of Higher Reality,* Houghton Mifflin, Boston

Schultes, R.E. (1969). "The New World Indians and Their Hallucinogenic Plants," *7th Annual Lecture Honoring Dr. Laura L. Barnes,* Nov. 12,1969

Schultes, R.E. (1976). *Hallucinogenic Plants,* Golden Press, NY

Schultes, R. & Hofmann, A. (1973). *The Botany and Chemistry of Hallucinogens,* Chas. Thomas, Springfield, IL

Schultes, R. & Hofmann, A. (1979). *Plants of the Gods,* McGraw-Hill (UK), Maidenhead, England

Shallis, M. (1982). *On Time,* Schocken, NY

Shulgin, A. & Shulgin, A. (1991). *Pihkal — A Chemical Love Story,* Transform Press, Berkeley

Smith, D., M.D. (March, 1985). "Abuse Folio Med Alert," *High Times Magazine*

Smith, E. (Spring, 1983). *"Ololiuqui* and *Badah* [sic] *Negro:* Nature's Cousins to LSD," *The Psychozoic Press,* #3

Smith, E. (Summer, 1983). "San Pedro: Cactus of Gentle Strength," *The Psychozoic Press,* #4

Stafford, P. (1992). *Psychedelics Encyclopedia,* 3rd ed., Ronin Publishing, Berkeley

Steinbrecher, E. (1978). *The Inner Guide Meditation,* Blue Feather Press, Santa Fe

Stolaroff, M. (No date), in Stafford, P. *Magic Grams: Inquiries into Psychedelic Consciousness,* Rosetta Folios, Berkeley

Strieber, W. (1988). *Transformation: the Breakthrough,* William Morrow, NY

Stuart, R. (February, 1992) "Peyote now legal for Huichol Indians," *The Sacred Record,* Willcox, AZ

Taussig, M. (1987). *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: a Study in Terror and Healing.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Tierra, M. (1988). *Planetary Herbology,* Lotus Press, Santa Fe

Valdes, L., et al. (1983). "Ethnopharmacology of *Ska Maria Pastora (Salvia Divinorum,* Epling and Jativa-M.)," *Journal of Ethnopharmacology, 7,* 287-312

Walsh, R. (Fall, 1990). "Shamanic cosmology: a psychological examination of the shaman's worldview," *Revision,* Vol. 13, No. 2

Walsh, R. (1990. *The Spirit of Shamanism,* Tarcher, LA

Weil, A. (1972). *The Natural Mind,* Houghton Mifflin, Boston

Weil, A. & Rosen, W. (1983). *Chocolate to Morphine: Understanding Mind-active Drugs,* Houghton Mifflin, Boston

Wilhelm, R., and Baynes, C (1967). *The I Ching,* Bollingen Series XIX, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ

Williamson, D. (Summer, 1985). "Recreational and sacramental use of 5-Meo-DMT," *The Psychozoic Press,* #10

Wittmann, C. (Fall, 1991). "Magical Flying Ointments," *The Herb Quarterly*

Yutang, L., ed. (1942). *The Wisdom of China and India,* Modern Library, NY

Zukav, G. (1979). *The Dancing Wu Li Masters,* Wm. Morrow, NY

"No hands on explorer of psychedelic hyperspace will want to be uninformed of the facts and techniques in this book. It is a valuable contribution to the new literature of do-it-yourself shamanism and psychoactive enthnobotany."

— **Terence McKenna, author of *Foods of the Gods***

From the author of *The Hydroponic Hot House* comes the boldest exploration of psychedelic plants since Terence McKenna's *Food of the Gods*. For the first time, theory and practice are linked in one consciousness-expanding book!

DeKorne is a "psychonaut," exploring the "imaginal realms" through personal experimentation and scholarly research. He guides the reader through the history and lore of psychotropic plants, with advice on how to handle the eerie "Entities" one encounters in "hyperspace."

A master gardener, DeKorne explains in loving detail how to cultivate many of these plants and how to extract their powerful psychoactive alkaloids. He provides down-to-earth information on dosages, typical reactions, length and intensity of experience, dangerous combinations, traditional and ritual uses, and much more. Plants and combinations covered include:

- **Belladonna Alkaloids**
  (Flying Ointments, Datura, Brugmansia, Devil's Weed)
- **D-Lysergic Acid Amide**
  (Morning Glories and Sleepy Grass)
- **Mescaline**
  (Peyote and San Pedro)
- **Ayahuasca**
  (Harmine, Harmaline, MAOIs, DMT, Syrian Rue, Phalaris Grass)
- **Smokable DMT from Plants**
  (A new discovery that will revolutionize psychedelia!)
- **Psilocybin**
  (Magic Mushrooms, including a potent "Mushroom Ayahuasca")
- **Minor Psychedelics**
  (Diviner's Mint, Coleus, Calamus Root, Heimia, Calea Zachatechichi, Fly Agaric Mushroom, Iboga)

Psychedelic Shamanism is a lucid, captivating introduction to the shamanic hypothesis with all the technical information needed to explore "inner space."

ISBN 0-9666932-5-6
90000>
EAN
9 780966 693256